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## *The Motives of Proteus*

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# *The Motives of Proteus*

*by*

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*Translated from the Spanish by*

ANGEL FLORES

*With an Introduction by*

HAVELOCK ELLIS

*. . . all these things are done in parables*

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## INTRODUCTION

A few months ago José Enrique Rodó died in Palermo on his way from South America to France.<sup>1</sup> This statement probably conveys no meaning, and it may even be that it is here made for the first time in England. We live, still with a certain degree of safety, in a remote island wrapped round by northern mists which deaden all the rumours of the world, and its finer voices only penetrate to us, if at all, from afar, slowly and with difficulty. South America we associate with various miscellaneous things, perhaps mostly unpleasant. We seldom think of it—even if we happen to have been there—as a land of poets and artists and critics. So it can scarcely be surprising that few among us know so much as the name of South America's best writer, who was also the best writer anywhere in the Castilian speech, and one of the most distinguished spirits of our time.

Our ignorance may seem the more ungracious if we learn that Rodó's most remarkable essay—his whole work may be said to be comprehended in some half-dozen long essays—is called *Ariel*.<sup>2</sup> This sensitive and exalted thinker, familiar with the finest culture of Europe, found the symbol of his aspirations for the world in the English poet's *Tempest*. *Ariel* is the long monologue (extending to a hundred pages) of a teacher

<sup>1</sup> This was written in the autumn of 1917.

<sup>2</sup> José Enrique Rodó: *Cinco Ensayos*. Madrid, 1915.

who once more gathers his old disciples around him in his study, dominated by a bronze statue of the Shakespearian spirit of the air at the moment when Prospero gives him his freedom. "Ariel symbolises the rule of reason and of feeling, generous enthusiasm, high and disinterested motives for action, the spirituality of culture, the vivacity and grace of intelligence, the ideal goal to which human selection tends, eliminating with the patient chisel of life the tenacious vestiges of Caliban, symbol of sensuality and torpor."

Prospero—for so his disciples have named him—discourses on the art of living. For Rodó believed with Shaftesbury that "virtue is a kind of art, a divine art," and the moral law "an æsthetics of conduct." To live in the finest sense is to exercise a free creative activity which passes beyond interested and material ends, to cultivate the leisure of the interior life, and from that centre to organize the beauty and harmony of society. To enforce this point of view, Rodó analyses at length, beneath the mask of Prospero, the spirit of the civilisation of the United States. He refrains from insinuating—such a suggestion would be alien to his gracious and sympathetic attitude—that this spirit is symbolised by Caliban. He admires, though he is unable to love or altogether to approve, the spirit of North America, and his penetrating analysis never even remotely verges on harshness or scorn. He distinctly believes, however, that the utilitarian conception of human destiny and equality in mediocrity as the social rule constitute in their intimate combination the spirit of Americanism. If it can be said that Utilitarianism is the Word of the English

spirit, then the United States is the Word made flesh. Rodó by no means implies that the same spirit may not be found also in South America. On the contrary, he declares that there is in the South an increasing Nordomania, but he regards it as opposed to the genius of Latin America, a mere artificial "snobisme" in the political sphere. It is necessary, even for the sake of America as a whole, that Latin America should jealously guard the original character of its collective personality, for nearly all luminous and fruitful epochs of history have been, as in Greece with the poles of Athens and Sparta, the result of two distinct correlated forces; the preservation of the original duality of America, while maintaining a genial and emulatory difference, at the same time favours concord and solidarity.

"In the beginning was action." In those words which Goethe set at the outset of *Faust*, Rodó remarks, the historian might begin the history of the North American Republic. Its genius is that of force in movement. Will is the chisel which has carved this people out of hard stone and given it a character of originality and daring. It possesses an insatiable aspiration to cultivate all human activities, to model the torso of an athlete for the heart of a freeman. The indiscriminating efforts of its virile energy, even in the material sphere, are saved from vulgarity by a certain epic grandeur.

Yet, asks Rodó, can this powerful nation be said to be realising, even tending to realise, the legitimate demands, moral, intellectual, and spiritual, of our civilisation? Is this feverish restlessness, centupling the movement and intensity of life, expended on objects that are

truly worth while? Can we find in this land even an approximate image of the perfect city?

North American life seems, indeed, to Rodó, to proceed in that vicious circle which Pascal described as the course of the pursuit of well-being which has no end outside itself. Its titanic energy of material aggrandisement produces a singular impression of insufficiency and vacuity. This people has not known how to replace the inspiring idealism of the past by a high and disinterested conception of the future, and so lives only in the immediate reality of the present. The genial positivism of England, it seemed to Rodó, has here been deprived of that idealism which was a deep source of sensibility beneath the rough utilitarian surface of the English spirit, ready to gush forth in a limpid stream when the art of a Moses struck the rock. English aristocratic institutions, however politically unjust and out of date, set up a bulwark to vulgar mercantilism which the American Republic removed, but left unreplaced. So it is that we find in the United States a radical inaptitude for selection, a general disorder of the ideal faculties, a total failure to realise the supreme spiritual importance of leisure. They have attained the satisfaction of their vanity of material magnificence, but they have not acquired the tone of fine taste. They pronounce with solemn and emphatic accent the word "art," but they have not been able to conceive that divine activity, for their febrile sensationism excludes its noble serenity. Neither the idealism of beauty nor the idealism of truth arouses their passion, and their war against ignorance results in a general semi-culture combined with languor

of high culture. Nature has not granted them the genius for propaganda by beauty or for apostolic vocation by the attraction of love. Bartholdi's statue of Liberty over New York awakens no such emotion of religious veneration as the ancient traveller felt when he saw emerge from the diaphanous nights of Attika the gleam of Athene's golden spear on the height of the Acropolis.

Just as in the main this analysis may be, it will occur to some readers that Rodó has perhaps attributed too fixed a character to North American civilisation, and has hardly taken into adequate account those germs of recent expansion which may well bring the future development of the United States nearer to his ideals. It must be admitted, indeed, that if he had lived a few months longer Rodó might have seen confirmation in the swift thoroughness, even exceeding that of England, with which the United States on entering the war sought to suppress that toleration for freedom of thought and speech which he counted so precious, shouting with characteristic energy the battle-cry of all the belligerents, "Hush! don't think, only feel and act!" with a pathetic faith that the affection of external uniformity means inward cohesion—a method of "self-inflicted camouflage," as Professor Dewey has termed it in a discussion of the "Conscription of Thought" which Rodó might have inspired. Still, Rodó himself recognised that, even as already manifested, the work of the United States is not entirely lost for what he would call "the interests of the soul." It has been said that the mercantilism of the Italian Republics paid the expenses

of the Renaissance, that the spices and ivory of Lorenzo de' Medici renewed the Symposia of Plato. There is in civilisation a transformation of force, by which the material becomes the spiritual, and provided that process is carried through, it seemed to Rodó, the North American Republic will escape the fate of Nineveh and Sidon and Carthage. Ariel is for Rodó the ultimate outcome of that process, the instinct of perfectibility, the ascension of the organised forms of Nature into the flaming sphere of spirit.

It will be seen that, alike in his criticism of life and his criteria of progress, Rodó remains essentially democratic. He is altogether out of sympathy with the anti-democratic conception of life often associated with Nietzsche's doctrine of the Super-man. He waived politely aside the affirmation of Bourget that the triumph of democracy would mean the defeat of civilisation, and greatly as he admired the genius of Renan, he refused to believe that 'a concern for ideal interests is opposed to the democratic spirit; such belief, indeed, would be the condemnation of Latin America as much as of Anglo-Saxon America. Rodó accepts democracy, but on that basis he insists on the need for selection. Even in Nature, he remarks, among flowers and insects and birds and onwards, we see natural selection favouring superiority and ensuring the triumph of beauty. It is not the destruction but the education of democracy which is needed in order to further this process of natural selection. Rodó held that it is the duty of the State to render possible the uniform revelation of human superiorities, wherever they exist. "Democratic equality is the most

efficacious instrument of spiritual selection." Democracy alone can conciliate equality at the outset with an inequality at the end which gives full scope for the best and most apt to work towards the good of the whole. So considered, democracy becomes a struggle, not to reduce all to the lowest common level, but to raise all towards the highest degree of possible culture. Democracy in this sense retains within itself an imprescriptible element of aristocracy, which lies in establishing the superiority of the best with the consent of all; but on this basis it becomes essential that the qualities regarded as superior are really the best, and not merely qualities immobilised in a special class or caste and protected by special privileges. The only aristocracy possible on a democratic basis is one of morality and culture. Superiority in the hierarchical order must be superiority in the capacity to love. That truth, Rodó declares, will remain rooted in human belief "so long as it is possible to arrange two pieces of wood in the form of a cross."

In *Ariel* Rodó never directly brings South America on the scene. He would gladly, one divines, claim for his own continent the privilege of representing Ariel. But he realised that much remained to do before that became possible. His love for his own country is embodied in three of his finest and latest essays, concerned with the three noblest figures of South America in different fields. In the first of these he deals with the greatest figure of South America in the sphere of actions, Bolívar, "the South American Napoleon." In the second he discusses attractively the life and environment of Juan Montalvo, the greatest prose-writer of South America,



with whose name Rodó is now associated. In the third he shows all his delicate critical discrimination in estimating the work of Ruben Dario, who was, as Rodó points out, not so much the greatest poet of South America as of contemporary Spain, an imaginative figure of world-wide interest. In these essays Rodó is revealed as the unfailing calm and lucid critic, discriminating and sympathetic, possessed of a style which, with its peculiar personal impress of combined gravity and grace, rendered him, in the opinions of good Spanish judges, the greatest contemporary master of the Castilian tongue.

That Rodó realised how far the finer spirits of South America yet are from completely moulding their own land to their ideals we may gather from various episodes of his work. He was not able to regard South America, any more than North America, as to-day a congenial soil for art. If he disliked the intolerant spirit of utilitarian materialism in the North, he equally opposed the intolerance of Jacobinism in the South. This is brought out in an admirable series of letters, entitled "*Liberalismo y Jacobinismo*," suggested by the action of the Charity Commissioners in removing all images of the Crucified Christ from the walls of hospitals, suppressing them, not as objects of worship (for that had already been done), but even as symbols. Rodó criticises this action, not from the point of view of Christianity which is not his, but from that of a sympathetic and tolerant Liberalism, to which he opposes the spirit of Jacobinism. By Jacobinism he means, in fair agreement

with Taine, a mental attitude of absolute dogmatism, necessarily implying intolerance, on the basis of rationalistic free-thought. Flaubert's Homais is its immortal embodiment. Rodó admirably analyses this attitude, and shows how, with all its clear logical thoroughness, it is out of touch with the complexities of life and lacks the sense for human realities. Rodó sees that true free-thought, far from being a mere rigid formula, is the result of an interior education which few can acquire. The attainment of toleration, of spiritual toleration, he regards as the great task of the past century—an affirmative and active toleration, "the great school of largeness in thought, of delicacy in sensibility, of perfectibility in character." He foresaw, even before the War, that there are troublous times ahead for freedom, but he saw, also, that even if but one soul should stand firm, there will be the palladium of human liberty.

Rodó was of the tribe of Quinet and Renan, of Fouillée and especially Guyau. Like those fine spirits, he desired to be the messenger of sweetness and of light, of the spirit of Jesus combined with the spirit of Athens, and the intolerance of rationalism seemed to him as deadly a poison to civilisation as that of Christianity. In his steady devotion to this combined ideal Rodó may be said to be European, and more distinctly French. But in his adaptation of that ideal to the needs of his own land, and his firm establishment of it on a democratic basis, he is the representative of South America. It was his final hope that out of the agony of this war there would emerge new ideals of life, new aspirations of art,

in which Latin America, stirred by the worldwide shock, would definitely affirm its own conscious personality.

Rodó was a Uruguayan, of old and wealthy family, born forty-five years ago in Montevideo, where he spent nearly the whole of his life. On leaving the University of his native city, where in later years he himself lectured on Literature, his activities found some scope in journalism, and he was interested in politics, being at one time a Deputy in the Uruguayan Chamber. The mood of his earliest writings is one of doubt, anxiety, scepticism; he seems to be in expectation of some external revelation or revolution. But his own personal vision became gradually established. His revelation was not from without, but from within. He attained a rare serenity and lucidity; and he remained always indifferent to applause. Indeed, amid the declamatory and impulsive extravagance which often marks the South American, it seemed to some that his attitude was the outcome of a temperament almost too calm and reasonable, and they recalled that neither in youth or later had he ever been known to be in love. But Rodó's spirit was as large-hearted and sympathetic as it was penetrating and keen. When he died, in Sicily, suddenly and alone, on his way at last to visit the land of France which he regarded as his intellectual home, he was exercising, it is said, a tranquil kind of spiritual royalty over the whole South American Continent. Henceforth his slender and very tall figure will no longer be seen striding rapidly through the streets of his native city, as his

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friend and fellow-countryman Barbagelata has described it, one arm swinging like an oar, and lifted aquiline face that recalled a condor of the Andes.

HAVELOCK ELLIS

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## PREFACE

*I do not publish a "first part" of PROTEUS: the material which I have chosen for these MOTIVES gives, in a summarized form, some general idea of the work, extensive enough (even if I limit it to what I have already written) to be edited at one time. The gaps in this volume will be the contents of the next, and thus successively. . . . And never shall PROTEUS be published in any other way but this, that is to say, I will never give it a concrete "architecture," nor a definite end: it will be always evolving, "living." The temper of the book (if it might be called so) allows such a wide ramification of ideas and motifs around a central thought, that nothing prevents me from making of it what I intend the work to be: a book in perpetual "becoming," an open book upon an indefinite perspective.*



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*The Motives of Proteus*

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## PROTEUS

**A** FORM of the sea, a deity of the sea, from whose restless bosom antiquity extracted a fertile generation of myths, Proteus was the guardian of Poseidon's seals. In the *Odyssey* and in the *Georgics* the poets sing of his venerable age, of his passing over the billows in a swift marine coach. Like all the divinities of the water he had the prophetic gift and the unerring knowledge of the present and the past. But he was avaricious with his wisdom, shy of consultation, and to elude the curiosity of men he resorted to his marvelous power of transforming himself into a thousand different forms. This faculty characterized him in fable and determined his ideal meaning in the realm of the legendary.

When the Homeric Menelāos desires to learn from him the course towards which he must bend his sails, when Vergil's Aristaeus demands from him the secret of the disease which consumes his bees, Proteus makes recourse to that mysterious virtue with which he could confuse those who took him unawares. Now he changed to a fierce lion, now to a writhing, scaly serpent; now, transformed into fire, he rose up like a flickering flame; then he became a tree with its proud branches lifted towards the sky; then a brook whose ripples burst into a rapid current. Always elusive, always new, he passed through the whole range of appearances yet fixed his most subtle essence in none. And in this infinite mutability, as a sea deity, he personified one of the aspects of the sea: he was the multi-form wave, intractable, incapable of stability or repose, the

wave that now revolts, now caresses, that sometimes lulls to rest, and at others thunders, that has all the spontaneities of impulse, all the vagueness of color, all the modulations of sound, never rising or falling in the same way, lifting and dropping back into the sea the liquid which it takes from it, imparting to that inert levelness, form, movement and change.

§ 1. *To renew oneself is to live. Our personal transformation in time*

To renew oneself is to live. . . . And, therefore, is not our personal transformation, in a way, a constant and infallible law of time? What does it matter if desire and the will remain fixed to one goal, when time passes and carries us away? Time is the supreme innovator. Its power, upon which all creation depends, is exercised as surely and as continuously over souls as over things. Each thought of your mind, each rhythm of your feelings, each determination of your free-will, and, even more, each instant of the seeming truce of indifference or of sleep which interrupts the process of your conscious activity (but not the process of that other activity which develops within your self without the participation of your will, without even your own knowledge), all these are but one impulse more towards a modification whose accumulated steps produce these visible changes from age to age, from decade to decade. Those changes are destitute of soul; perhaps they surprise him who has not witnessed the gradual development of a life, just as it surprises a traveller who returns to his fatherland after a long absence to see the white heads of those whom he left in their youth.

Each one of us is, successively, not *one* but *many*. And these successive personalities which emerge one from another

usually present the queerest and most astonishing contrasts. Sainte-Beuve made clear the reactions that such psychical metamorphoses of time produce in one who has not seen their successive phases. He shows how the portrait, painted in Florence, of Dante as a young man, with his almost jovial sweetness, is the very antithesis of the bitter and awful aspect of the Ghibelline as he appears on the coins of glory. Likewise we experience such a reaction before the portrait of the forty-year-old Voltaire, with his kindly and tender gaze, which reveals to us an intimate world, soon to be frozen by the senile malice of the demolisher.

After all, what is Racine's *Athalie* but the tragedy of this fatal and slow transformation? When the fateful dream came to the adorer of Baal she realized that in her heart, which time had tamed, there was no longer that strength, that pride, that terrible resolution, that dauntless confidence, which once made her renounce remorse and piety. And such transformations as these, not excepting the most profound and essential, require no abrupt, passionate, or violent ruptures. Even in the most monotonous and placid life these transformations are possible, a gradual incline is enough for them. The efficacy of *actual causes*, by means of which the wise man explained the greatest changes of the universe, in showing the power of the accumulation of unconscious actions, bears an influence also upon the history of the human heart. *Actual causes* are the key to many enigmas of our destiny. Exactly when did you cease to believe? Exactly when did that love which burns in you now first come into being? Seldom is there an answer to such questions. . . . But nothing happens without sequence. There is no impression which does not leave a trace of its passing upon your sensibility. There is no image that does not imprint a light copy of itself on the unconscious depths of your memories. There is

no idea nor act that does not help to determine, even to an infinitesimal degree, the course of your life, the synthetic sense of your movements, the physiognomical form of your personality. The hidden little tooth that gnaws in the depths of your soul, the drop of water that falls rhythmically in its dark cavern, the silkworms that weave their finest threads there,—they take no rest, they never cease; and their coöperative activities every minute kill you, remodel you, destroy you, create you . . . death whose sum is death, resurrections whose persistence is life.—Who has expressed this instability better than Seneca when he said, pondering on the fugitiveness and instability of things, “I myself, in the very moment of saying that everything changes, have I not already changed?” We persist only in the continuance of our modifications, in the more or less regular order which controls them, in the force that leads us forward to the most mysterious and transcendental transformation of them all. . . . We are the wake of a vessel, whose substance does not remain the same for two successive moments, because as it incessantly dies it is born again from the waves; that wake is not a persistent reality but a moving form, a succession of rhythmical impulses, which operate upon a constantly renovated object.

*§2. The will controls and guides this transformation. Indefinite persistence of education*

This continuous transformation is the daughter of necessity. It will serve as a frame for the rational and free energy from the very moment it is evinced to the vigilant glance of the intelligence and to the active assistance of the will. If, in so far as the slow evolution of its process is concerned, this transformation seems to dwell in the darkness of the uncon-

scious, its resultant manifestations do not likewise elude our notice, nor do they surpass the foreknowledge of wisdom. And if the transforming power of time is inevitable, it is within its jurisdiction to limit and divide this power, now stimulating or retarding its impulse, now guiding it to a definite, conscious end, within the wide gap that lies between its necessary extremes.

He who, ignorant of the dynamic character of our nature, considers himself definitely and completely constituted, and proceeds according to this premise, really allows time to modify him at its whim, by forfeiting the participation which means the free control over ourselves in the development of our personality. He who lives according to reason is, then, one who, acquainted with the ceaseless activity of change, tries each day to grasp a clearer notion of his inner state and of the changes which occur in his environment, and who rules his thoughts and his acts in accordance with this ever-active knowledge.

The indefinable, albeit persistent, principle of education, flows from what is incomplete and transitory in the whole *actual* equilibrium of our spirit. One of the most deadly errors, among those that poison our conception of existence, is the one which causes us to consider life divided into two successive and naturally separated parts: one, suited to learning—that in which one accumulates the provisions for the way and gives lasting form to those energies that afterwards are to be spent in action; the other, that in which one no longer learns nor accumulates but is destined to put what has been learned and accumulated into use. How much more significant it is to think that just as one leaves one battle for another, rougher and more difficult,—which is life, so also the doors of school open to another school greater and more advanced,—that is the world. As long as we live our

personality is upon the anvil. As long as we live there is nothing in us which is not likely to be retouched and complemented. Everything is a revelation, everything is a lesson, in everything there is a hidden treasure and the sun of each day wrests from things a new flash of originality. And within us, as time passes by, there is a constant need for renewal, for acquiring new force and new light to guard oneself against unknown evils, to aim at riches not yet enjoyed, and, finally, to prepare our adaptation to conditions alien to our experience. To satisfy this necessity and to utilize this treasure, it is necessary to keep the idea that we are in perpetual apprenticeship and in constant initiation, alive. It is fitting, from the intellectual standpoint, to take care that our interest does not wither nor vanish completely, nor our childish curiosity with the liveliness of its fresh and candid attention. Nor must we allow the stimulus which grows from the knowledge of our own ignorance (since we are always ignorant) to fade, nor must we lose that faith in the power which consecrated the lips of the teacher and which made holy the pages of the book, that faith founded no longer either in a single book nor in a single teacher, but dispersed and diffused wherever one must seek for it. And in this discipline of the heart and the will, whence the soul of each one of us receives its temper, it is even more fitting to refine our power of reaction, to keep watch over habit formations, to stimulate anything that may extend our love to a wider range or our energy to a new aptitude, and to evoke those images that animate hope instead of those which recall memories, inimical legions that strive, one for our liberty, the other for our slavery.

### § 3. *Order and rhythm in change. The curve*

As long as it is possible for us to maintain a calm and steady rhythm of temporal transformations in the successive

realization of our personality by controlling and guiding them, but without taking away their essential characteristics, we should remain faithful to this sacred rhythm. Antiquity imagined that Hours were the daughters of Justice—a myth of profound meaning. An ideally harmonious life would be one whose every day meant, by virtue of the adjusted impulses of time and of the will, a step forward, a kind of forgetting of things past, a kind of linking with other things which would, in turn, prepare the way for those to come, a slight but precise bend which would help to determine the total curve of existence. If the struggles of the world and the thousand causes of inequality in people did not make difficult the maintenance of this uniting process, it would then suffice to take our life in any two successive instances of its development in order to raise the harmonious architecture of the whole from the relation between them both; just as we are enabled by the mere discovery of a tooth to reconstruct the extinct organism; or just as in classic architecture we can ascertain from the module, given the thickness of a column, the complete eurythmy of the structure.

The healthy pleasure which accompanies the adequate fulfillment of our spiritual activity originates from the rhythmic circulation of our sentiments and ideas, not like the pleasure of a dance gracefully executed (which may be considered the most exact image of a harmonious life) that arises from the rhythm of muscular coördination. Dance, in the highest acceptance of the term, is life, or if you will the idea of life; dance whose beauty combines thought with its *music*, action with its gymnastics. The poet of *Wallenstein* singing the enchantment of active human sculpture, asks one who moves to the sonorous cadences with agile body, "Why is it that what you respect in your art is unknown to you in life? Why do you not always follow rhythms?"



Grace and facility of achievement are the very same thing; the characteristics of a beautiful movement are also the elements of dynamic economy; in the physical world as well as in the moral world, we economize our strength for the sake of elegance, of order, of proportion. We may define the conditions upon which the facility and grace of our activity depend: to pass thus as if down a gentle slope in a slow delightful gradation from one idea to another; to interrelate the successive *tendencies* of our will in such a way that they will not determine independent and disconnected courses, wherein action terminates abruptly at the end of each course only to spring up again by start and effort, but that all will link themselves together into one single persistent movement, modified only by their direction as by a lateral impulse continually communicating the necessary inflection.

Hence, one who rushes suddenly into an unknown enterprise, without reflection or trial, becomes disconcerted and fatigued, while an undertaking is easy and pleasant for him who has awaited it with wise foresight and attempts it with sufficient preparation. One who has to unexpectedly abandon a soul-situation in which he has enjoyed happiness and love experiences an inconsolable grief; while he who moves away from his old ideas and affections, with slow and gradual steps, like one who gazes upon the shore from a departing ship, sees these affections and ideas vanish beyond the horizon of time with a mere tranquil sadness, perhaps even with a melancholy joy.

The diagram of a life which manifests itself in a well-ordered activity would be a curve of smooth and graceful undulation. This curve is varied, not like a rigid straight line which is always exactly the same, and rushes rapidly to its end. Only by the more or less violent transition of angles could a straight line be joined at its end with another line,

born of an impulse in a new and divergent direction; while in the curve unity and diversity become one, because as it constantly changes its course, each new direction that it takes is indicated beforehand by its predecessor.

§ 4. *The harmony of the ages. Glorious old-age*

The harmony of different ages and the beauty inherent in the individual and genial being of each stage is engendered from the regular and easy development of life in that curve which links its own modifications. Thus is generated the typical order which makes them like the cantos of a well-planned poem, wherein each step in the action contributes to a unity which will majestically consecrate the conclusion; or, when life is shipwrecked by premature death, the action may remain suspended in poetic mystery because of the interruption of the work, which has been maimed but not made discordant when Nature desists, as a negligent poet, from finishing the poem.

True eternal youth depends on this rhythmical and tenacious self-renewal, which neither anticipates vainly that which is not yet ripe, nor allows itself to adhere to obsolete modes of life; causing the despair, the deception, the bitterness which failure brings from sterile efforts; but on the contrary it tries to find new motives of interest and new forms of action among the newer possibilities and conditions of existence; which in truth, bring to the soul a certain sentiment of inextinguishable youth that springs from the consciousness of a life perpetually renovated and of constant adaptation.

The inevitable work of time, when guided in such a way, would not be a retrogression, stealing strength and capacities from the soul; nor would it be a barbaric profanation of the

delicate and beautiful things which the chorus of the divine Hours joined in their first flights. It would be a discovery of horizons; it would be the sun-life which, while growing pale, becomes larger. Thus, above all of the glorious biographies of men there reigns the loftiness of triumphal old-age, like peace upon the heights; the old-age of Epimenides, the old-age of Sophocles, pinnacle of the most beautiful and harmonious existence which incarnated the serene soul of antiquity. It is Sophocles, the old Sophocles, old in years and in genius, who puts in the lips of old men the most lyrical metres, apotheosis of his country and his race, the immortal hymn of the old men of Colonus. . . .

There is an entrancing ideality, an austere charm, in the life which ends in completing a dialectical order of human perfection. . . . Let us go up the current of time, yonder where that very name of Sophocles leads us. . . .

### § 5. *A frieze of the Parthenon*

Now we are in Athens. The Ceramicus opens its wide portals to a vast multitude which approaches the festive city in ordered procession. It winds through the city, visits its finest and most beautiful parts and ascends to the Acropolis. On the summit, at the Parthenon, Pallas Athene awaits the homage of her people. This is the holiday consecrated to her.

You see the magistrates, the priests and the musicians passing by. You see the vestal virgins holding amphoras and ritual baskets, which rest gracefully on their heads. But yonder, behind the glistening herd of choice oxen that plod along to be sacrificed to the goddess, comes a legion of exultant youths, singing a martial hymn, some on foot, others in chariots and still others on horseback. In their wake, do you not see a venerable concert of forms and rhythms, like the

notes of sacred music, which even the eyes might hear? Do you not see a grand austere picture, a living picture from which emanates a wave of sublime gravity which enraptures the soul as does the soothing gaze of a god? . . . Tall and firm of stature, the measured procession marches slowly, but not through weakness or fatigue. They are men with majestic, unperturbed, noble foreheads whose natural expanse has been widened by the loss of some of the snow-white hair that falls in waves over slightly bent shoulders. Their far-off eyes, sunken deep in their sockets, seem, Olympic in their power of vision; snowy beards cover their broad, round chests like wide-spread collars. What divine hand has selected this chorus of aged beauty which soothes our eyes after the glamour of radiant youth? Each state of Attica has offered its most beautiful old men. Athens has invited them to this festival; Athens will reward the state which sends the most handsome old men. And to crown the spectacle which seems to have conjoined all that is fine and noble in life to exhibit it to the goddess, Athens will honor old-age as the gift of a generic beauty. This is, in plastic arts, the exemplification of an ideal beauty which is characteristic of, yet a little different from, that which belongs to youth, different in sensibility, will and intellect.

§ 6. *How a violent transition may be necessary. An example of it in natural development*

The rhythmic and gradual flow of life with no pools or cataraacts, so that the will in steering the passage of time may be like a helmsman, who has only to trust himself to friendly waves, is, then, the pattern after which we should try to mould ourselves. But we can not be sure that this will be realized in its entirety, especially since the world lacks that cor-

relation and almost perfect conformity between the environment and the soul, between the stage and the action which was the excellence of antiquity. No matter how much disordered mutations and brusque changes of direction may alter the symmetrical beauty of life and weaken the concentration of its strength, they are often an inescapable fatality, since external events and influences to which we must adapt ourselves usually come to us not in a smooth and gentle stream but in tumultuous surges which disrupt and destroy the equilibrium of our capacity for reaction.

It is not only in the history of society that there is place for revolutionary upheavals. Likewise there are produced in the individual moments when undiscovered motives and conditions, new stimuli and necessities suddenly appear, perhaps ruining the labors of many years, perhaps suscitating others which would have taken as many years to appear if they were awaited in the natural course of events. They are moments of incipience or *palingenesis* in which it might be said that the whole soul is re-fused and the things of our immediate past become remote or strange to us. One's own natural development, in its very essence, offers a typical example of these sudden transitions, of these vital revolutions, both in a moral and in a physiological way, when life leaps with a sudden bound over the fence that separates the candor of early youth from the ardors of that which follows it, and new sensations invade consciousness with an eruptive and tumultuous force, while the body, changing itself, accelerates the tempo of its growth.

Often the course of moral life, following the declivities and winds of the world without intervention, without even the advice of consciousness, brings cataracts in its current. But it is also a prerogative of voluntary initiative to sometimes anticipate their time of fruition and always to order them

wisely towards an appropriate end. Just as there is an art of persistent evolution which consists in skilfully guiding the spontaneous and natural movement of time, a quotidian art, there is, also, the art of heroic occasions where it is necessary to force the measured succession of events, the art of great impulses, of energetic releases, of unexpected vocations. The will which is prudent in respecting the jurisdiction of time would be inactive and feeble if it abandoned itself completely to it. On the other hand, there is not a single disadvantage of inferior condition that does not enjoy a relative compensation, and to change by brusque transitions and violent contrasts, even if it interrupts the order present in a harmonious life, usually tempers the soul and imparts to it a fortitude that no more gentle movement would have ever been able to give it; just as iron is tempered and becomes strong in passing from the glowing fire to cold water.

§ 7. *Conscious and controlled change, always*

Life is usually a rhythmic and slow evolution, a forced reaction if necessary, but always a conscious and directed change. Our life is either a perpetual self-renewal or a languid death. To know what has died within us, what must perish that the soul may rid itself of needless weight; to feel that the well-being and peace which one enjoys after a day's work will become with each new sun a new conquest, a new prize and not a mere reward for bygone triumphs; not to admit an irremediable end as long as action is still possible, nor any impossibility of action while life lasts; to understand that every circumstance which is fatal to the growth of any phase of activity, of happiness, of love, brings within itself, as its opposite and as its compensation, the fecund seed for other forms; to understand what the philosopher meant when he

affirmed that all is done beautifully when it is done *at its right time*, that there is but one accomplishment to an opportunity, that each day is interesting because of its newness; to anticipate satiation and boredom so as to direct the soul from the road where it may meet them, and, if they manage to outwit our foresight, to rebel against them through an *invention* of the will (the will, as well as thought, is an inventive faculty) that proposes and determines a new goal for itself; to renew oneself, to transform oneself, to remake oneself . . . is this not the philosophy of action and of life? Is this not life itself, if we mean by life something essentially different from the somnambulism of the animal or from the vegetating of the plant? . . .

### §8. *Watching a boy play*

" . . . Frequently a sublime meaning is hidden in a child's play."  
SCHILLER: *Thecla* (Voice of a Spirit).

The boy was playing in the garden with a glass which a sunbeam, in the limpid ambient air of the afternoon, made as iridescent as a prism. Holding it, not very firmly, in one hand, he carried in the other a reed with which he struck the glass rhythmically. After each stroke he remained attentive, bending his graceful head, while the sonorous waves, as if born of the vibrating trill of a bird, escaped from the wounded crystal to die gently on the air. He continued his improvised music and then capriciously he changed the bent of his play. He stooped and collected in the hollow of his hands some clean sand from the path and poured it into the glass until he filled it. When he had finished his task, he neatly smoothed the sand heaped above the brim. After a little while he wanted to draw from his glass its fresh resonance again, but the glass, bedumbed, as if a soul had escaped from its

diaphanous bosom, answered the stroke of the stick with nothing more than the noise of a dry percussion. The artist made an angry gesture at the failure of his lyre. He should have shed a tear but he kept it back. He looked around him hesitatingly. His tearful glance alighted upon a very white and splendid flower. From a neighboring hillock it swayed upon its branch and, as it came forward, seemed to reject the company of the leaves in anticipation of some bold hand. Smiling the boy went directly towards the flower, struggled to reach it and captured it with the complicity of the wind, that lowered the branch for an instant. After he succeeded in making it his own, he placed it gratefully in his glass, now converted into a proud flower vase. He buried the flimsy stalk in that same sand that previously had suffocated the musical soul of the glass. Proud of his compensation, he raised up the enthroned flower as high as he could, and paraded it triumphantly amongst the blossoming profusion of the garden.

§ 9. *The meaning of this parable*

Wise, candid philosophy! I thought. From the cruel failure he receives no lasting dismay nor does he insist on recapturing the lost pleasure but, on the contrary, in those very conditions which determined his failure, he finds the makings of a new game, of a new ideality, of a new beauty. . . . Do we not find here an example for conduct in life? Oh, if in the course of our life we should only imitate the child! If we could only act as he did when fate continually limits our projects, our hopes and our dreams! . . . The child's example tells us that we must not persist in forcing sounds from the glass which once fascinated us, if the nature of things wishes it to remain mute. Furthermore, it tells us that we must search all around us for a redeeming flower;



a flower to put into the sand which imposed silence on the glass. . . . Let us not foolishly dash the glass against the rocks of the road simply because it sounds no more. Maybe the redeeming flower exists. Maybe it is near by. So speaks the parable of the child, and all virile philosophy, *virile* because of the spirit that animates it, will confirm this fecund teaching.

§ 10. *Attitude in disillusion and failure. Any Good can be Substituted by Another Kind of Good*

Let neither failure nor disillusion profit by the facile discouragement of inconstancy, since the dream reveals its vanity and its inaccessible heights, since that faith whose roots are sapless now abandons you, since the over-worked ideal dies, virile philosophy will not be the one to lead you to that nonsensical stubbornness which yields not even to necessity, nor will it be the one to incline you towards ludicrous and idle scepticism; Horace's dwelling, where garlands deck the brows of the vanquished; nor yet the one which, like Harold's, will rouse you to a rebellious and tragic frenzy; nor the one that will make you haughty, like Alfred de Vigny in the aloofness of a disdainful stoicism; nor will it be that weak and despicable one which endeavors to make you regard as good that state into which the loss of your faith or of your love has thrown you, like the Agrippina of whom the ancients speak as an unusual extoller of his own misfortunes, who wrote a eulogy on the fever which deprived him of health, and another on infamy when he was stigmatized as a defamer, and still another on exile when he was banished.

A philosophy worthy of strong souls is that which teaches that from an irremediable evil one must extract the essence of a new good quite different from that one to which fate

has dealt a blow. One must find stimulus and aim for accomplishment along a path branching out from the same highway. If you search your memory for misfortunes which you have suffered, you will readily see that the majority of them blossom into relative good and that if, perchance, this good brought no benefits to compensate for the magnitude of the misfortune that served them as a propitious veil, it was perhaps because the will did not strive assiduously to cultivate the seed which the misfortune offered as a recompense and as a recovery of interest and joy in living.

Just as one who is compelled to mitigate the horror of death in his soul but can not enchain death by the hope of immortality comes to think of it as a natural transformation wherein the being persists in spite of the fact that one of its transitory forms disappears; likewise, if one wishes to sweeten the bitterness of grief, there is nothing so efficacious as to consider it a mere happening, a trick of change which may lead us directly to a new good, to a good sufficient to compensate for what we have lost. A new vocation must follow the one that has failed; a new love must take the place of the one that has perished; the consolation of a new felicity must replace the one that has vanished. Within the compass of the world, the eyes of the sage will nearly always perceive the flower of consolation with which to adorn the glass, which fate has silenced; and looking within ourselves to that part of the soul with which we are acquainted, if this part should wither or be drained of its vitality, how much could be said about those aptitudes unknown to the possessor! How much could be said about those hidden treasures which at a propitious moment surge to the clear light of consciousness and translate themselves into resolute and spirited deeds!

There are times—and who can doubt this?—when the reparation of the lost good pledges itself to revivify the same

good; when it is permissible to pour the sand out of the glass so that it may ring as sweetly as before; but if the inexorable force of time, or any other form of necessity is the cause of the loss, then imperturbable obstinacy would result in an action just as irrational as cowardly, inactive assent and as tragic or sceptical dismay.

### § 11. *Don Quixote Vanquished*

Don Quixote, master of reasonable madness and sublime sanity, has in his history a page that may be mentioned at this point. Can we find in him any criticism or concept which does not contain an immortal significance, a lesson? Is not each of his steps through the world equivalent to a thousand upward steps, up to that point where our judgment fails and our prudence becomes an obstruction? Conquered by the Knight of the White Moon in an extraordinary fight, Don Quixote is obliged in accordance with the conditions of the fight to desist for a certain time from his exploits and to give a truce to his passion for adventure. Don Quixote, who might have preferred to lose his life when he lost the combat, nevertheless respects the pact of honor. Determined, though not very resigned, he takes the road to his village.

"When I was a knight-errant," he says, "daring and valiant, by my deeds I gained credit to my exploits; and now that I am reduced to a mere walking squire I will gain reputation to my words by faithfully performing my promise." With Sancho he reaches the meadows, where they had previously seen some shepherds, trying to imitate the life of Arcadia, and there an idea, a balm to his melancholy, stirs the soul of the conquered knight. Addressing his com-

panion, he invites him, during the period of obligatory retirement, to accompany him in pursuing a pastoral life, and lulled by the music of rebecs, flageolets and flutes, to establish a lively and delightful Arcadia in the heart of that pleasant solitude. "The willows will yield us their shade, the roses present us their inoffensive sweets, and the spacious meads will be our carpets, diversified with colors of all sorts, blessed with the purest air, and unconfined alike, we shall breathe that, and freedom. The moon and stars, our tapers of the night, shall light our evening walks. Light hearts will make us merry and mirth will make us sing. Love will inspire us with a theme, and with wit, and Apollo with harmonious lays. So shall we become famous, not only while we live, but we shall make our loves eternal as our songs."

Do you understand the transcendental beauty of this resolution? The sentence to abandon his ideal of life for a certain period does not drive Don Quixote either to rebellion to the obedience imposed upon him by honor, or to a grumbling, idle grief, to resign himself to a trivial and prosaic quietude. He seeks a way to give his existence a new and ideal flavor. He transforms the penance of his defeat in such a way as to enjoy a new poetry and a new beauty. He tends from that point toward the ideality of quietude, just as before he tended toward the ideality of action and adventure. Hindered by the conditions that misfortune has imposed upon him, he wants to show that fate can deny him a kind of glory, the kind preferred by him and already about to be achieved, but that it can not stanch the ardent vein which springs from his soul, and which innundates it with superior desires, a vein always capable of cutting or finding a trench to lead to its end, among the base realities of the world.

§ 12. *Grief at the failure of a vocation. The "reserves" in our spirit*

Disillusion in a vocation toward which our energies and hopes have long aspired is, doubtless, one of the most excruciating forms of human suffering. Life loses its purpose. The soul loses the pole of ideality which was magnetizing it. In the bitterest electuary of this pain, there is, simultaneously, something of the pain of one whose love death is stealing, something of the pain of another who loses the fortunes which have cost him many years' efforts and also something of the pain of one who sees himself expelled and outlawed from familiar intercourse with his fellow men. The suicide of Gros, that of Leopold Robert and that which Alfred de Vigny idealized in his *Chatterton* are tragic pictures of this despair which, in other cases, ends by diluting and decrystallizing its bitterness in the insipidity of ordinary life.

Nevertheless, a vocation which has crumbled forever, either because of the insurmountability of the difficulty upon which the development of the aptitude stumbles or because of the basic imperfection of the aptitude itself, may be, and usually is, in the scheme of Nature, only a chance to vary the course of life without decreasing its intensity or its honor. Often the fate that forced the will to abandon the promising course which it pursued has brought with it the antecedent and the opportunity necessary for greater glory. But even though similar cases do not enter into account, I am inclined to think that only very occasionally can failure in a vocation be considered entirely irretrievable; that is, if by irretrievable one is to understand that there is no pain in being compensated by the manifestation of an unusual capacity in another field of activity, not even when the soul sees so vast an

horizon of time stretch out before it, not even when the soul commands powerful forces of resistance. It is hard for us to know all that lies silent and dormant within us. There is always a virtual part in our personality of which we are unaware.

A powerful vocation, which has long exercised control over the soul by concentrating upon itself the application of undivided attention and all the vigor of the will, is like a brilliant light. It darkens other dimmer lights, as the rumblings of thunder obscure many softer sounds. If the light or the thunder die out, the lights and noises, which they have suppressed, make us aware of their existence. Thus latent abilities, unknown talents have a favorable opportunity to show themselves. They frequently do and at a time when the vocation which was formerly predominant is losing its ascendancy, especially when the same conditions which hitherto constituted an inferiority with no promise of any specialized activity are stimulating and superior to any others. Rare, indeed, is the soul in which there does not exist, unfertilized, some potential ability besides those which it already recognizes and cultivates; as rare as this is a sky so cloudy that the setting sun reveals no star in it, or a shore so quiet that there no sound follows the silence of the sea.

I should call these hidden capabilities, which are inhibited by the favorite one that we have selected to use, the *reserves* of each soul. I want to show you how the necessity for seeking a new trend of action, which reanimates our spirits after the death of some beloved vocation, and keeps one watchful and alert to the calls which may come from the heart of things; I want to show you, again, how this necessity arouses such hidden capabilities with a redeeming efficacy until they replace (and in more than one case, advantageously) the very ability whose loss is deplored as an irremediable misfortune.

§ 13. *Aptitudes that are Revealed at the Death of Others*

There is nothing more intensely suggestive to the intelligence than an unforeseen and involuntary retirement from the life of action. The soul, by concentrating all its first aspirations on this, meets in its path unconquerable obstacles, that compel it to suppress natural inclinations. Then it experiences perhaps a melancholic desire to set upon the road of speculation and theory, and on the road of imitation and imagery, which constitute the work of art, toward the same goal, which it failed to reach in reality. Or maybe it desires rather to approach a different goal, one determined by the spontaneity of the intelligence, which finally declares its characteristic and personal tenor. The origin of the vocation of many writers, thinkers and artists is none other than this.

Vauvenargues offers an excellent example. This good-natured psychologist was born with the heroic vocation for action. He was assiduously pursuing this kind of glory when ill health soon came between him and his vocation. The soldier's melancholy in the seclusion of undesired inactivity gave birth to the inspiration of the moralist.

Perhaps his elegant poetical genius would never have dawned in Ronsard if he had not finally, in spite of the delay of a capricious ambition to become a diplomat, failed as a king's messenger, fortunately enough, to become the leader of the *Pléiade*.

Scaliger, as well as Niepce and Hartmann and a hundred more who dreamt sometimes of heroic laurels, owed the realization of the aptitude through which they achieved greatness to a physical disability which doomed them to failure in a life of action. Likewise, the sickness which absented William Prescott from the bar set him on his glorious path as a his-

torian. The wound which benumbed Rugendas' hand from the use of the burin was the occasion that compelled him to attempt other greater undertakings, with the result that he won more fame through his paintings than through his engravings.

There is a remarkable similarity in the story of two lyric artists who prematurely lost their natural gift for singing. Nevertheless they illuminate the memory of posterity with the brilliance of other great faculties, which they manifested later. They are the painter, Ciceri, and the Danish storyteller, Andersen. Peter Charles Ciceri was, in his youth, back in the times when the magic of Crescentini's eloquence was thrilling the court of Napoleon I, a promising aspirant to the lyric stage because of the grace of his voice and his delicate artistic sentiments. His aptitude and his devoted application blended so well with his natural gifts that he dedicated long years of his life to cultivating and perfecting those abilities before he resolved to exhibit them. When he was about to do so, a serious fall injured him for life, and Ciceri lost irretrievably the beauty of his voice. All the zeal of his existence had vanished in smoke. He was left with no aim worthy of his life. . . . To forget his sorrow, he formed the habit of frequenting the studio of one of his friends, a painter. There, an interest through which his soul seemed to convalesce gradually conquered him by the fascination of color and line. The more he devoted himself to this interest, the more he felt the urge to express himself in that art. Success crowned his first attempt with the solicitude of one who hastens to a long-awaited call. This treasure which was hidden in the furthest corner of his soul and whose existence, perhaps, he would never have suspected if he had not lost that other ability which he obviously possessed, was not long in defining his peculiar talent. It was the instinct for scenographic paint-



ing, for grand effects of perspective, color, and decoration. Ciceri was crowned master of scenography in that same hall of the Opera in which, as a young man, he had hoped to triumph as a singer. The generation which for the first time applauded Auber, Meyerbeer and Rossini always associated with its appreciation of their art the memory of the artist's brush which lent a prodigious, plastic life to the settings of their works.

The case of Andersen is identical if we substitute literature for painting.

§ 14. *Obstacles of a Moral Nature which Promote New Aptitudes*

The impossibility of continuing the way once begun, due to obstacles of a moral nature, certainly has not been less fruitful in fortunate suggestions. La Rochefoucauld was one of the leaders of the aristocratic revolt under Richelieu's régime. In the heat of ambitions of the Fronde, he saw his influence and dreams of political power shattered. Then, longing for the balm of forgetfulness, he sought it in society life which was so full of intellectual fruitions in that country and age. There, the stimulus of sparkling conversation awoke in him a critical acumen and a facile style. La Rochefoucauld became a great writer due to his failure as a great statesman. Antiquity attributes a similar origin to Sallust's literary vocation.

The Catholicism of Moore as was the case with other Irishmen of his creed closed the doors of a preferred public life for him, and was responsible for his entrance into the literary field. Catinat, future conqueror of Phillipsburg, a newly graduated lawyer, having failed the bar, extracts from his

misfortune the impulse which drives him to aspire successfully to the glory of arms.

§ 15. *What are you searching for?*

What have you sought in the place where that vague voice sounds and those hundred towers rise up in the air? Why do you come with humbled eyes and with the lassitude of sterile weariness which smothers in you the effervescence of life at its best? . . . I have seen many like you pass by. I know your story, pilgrim, you need not tell me it. You have stepped out for the first time into the wide compass of the world. Dreams of ambition accompanied you, but now they have vanished forever. . . . You lost the meager wealth of your soul. Darkening doubt entered your heart. Now you return to your native hearth without hope in yourself, without love for yourself, the saddest despair and the most fatal disaffection that can exist. Where the footsteps of others allured you, where the horse-dealers' clamor made you tarry and the colors of the fair dazzled you, where a hundred times you were charmed without being inspired, never did you find the good you were longing for. Wounded at heart, you keep thinking, "The good I dreamt of was a vain dream." But I tell you that in that instant when you renounced the search as hopeless, you were nearest to the good of which you were dreaming. Your discouragement and melancholy affect the concentration of your glance upon your innermost self. Great beginning, great occasion, great gust of favorable wind!

There is, pilgrim, a path where the one who enters and follows loses all fear of being deceived. The way is wide, even, straight and clear after its rugged, winding beginnings. It passes through the midst of all the cultivated fields which

produce honor and profit. Whoever arrives by this path at the stage of the world may consider that he has harvested all those plants of marvellous virtue which the legends mention: the great-flea-bane which wards off enchantments; the nepenthe which restores joy, and the mushroom which instils the ardor for conflict. To have tried this path is worth as much as the possession of the paragon stone which can ascertain the real worth of things whose external appearances excite us. By this route, one goes forth to break the jaws of lions as well as to scatter the olive branch of peace. When one seeks them by other roads, all lands are ultimately deserts and wastes, but if it were *the* road, the most arid land is changed into a fertile emporium. Its dryness bursts into springs of living waters. The bare rocks clad themselves with woodland and the air is filled with hosts of brilliantly colored birds. Take this path, pilgrim, and the good you dreamt of will be yours. Do you raise your eyes? Do you look round about at the horizon? . . . Not out there, not afar, but into the depths of your being, into the sanctum of your soul, into the arcanum of your thought, into the hidden wells of your heart, into yourself! In yourself alone must you seek the entrance to the redeeming path!

§16. *There is a Sure Path—it is the one that leads to the depths of one's being*

Do you believe no longer in what your soul holds? Do you think that you have exhausted all the propensities and possibilities within your soul? Do you mean to tell me that you have tried in action all those energies and aptitudes that, with full confidence, you esteemed greatest within you, and that now that you have failed, you are like a ship without a rudder, like a lyre without strings, like a quadrant without

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the sun? . . . But to discover whether you have really drained the very foundations of your personality, it is necessary to know your personality completely. But will you dare assert that you know it completely? Do you think that the image of it which is reflected in your consciousness is not liable to be amended and complemented—that it does not admit greater development, greater clarity, greater truth? No one succeeded in reaching a full knowledge of oneself, a task arduous beyond measure, without realizing first, that each profound search of the examiner, however simple and pellucid it may be, is like the water of the sea, for the more one drinks the thirstier one gets, or like a chain of abysses. And you pretend to know yourself to the point where you consider yourself eternally limited by your conscious and actual being! . . . How can you pretend to fathom, by a mere glance, that complexity quite different from that of any other living soul, that *unique* originality, essential to the order of the world, which, an unknown force, regulates the order of things deposited within you, as well as within every man? Why instead of denying yourself with futile obstinacy do you not attempt to advance and charter the unknown region of your soul? . . . Man of little faith! what do you know about that which may lie within you? . . .

### § 17. *Leuconoe's Reply*

I dreamt once that the great Trajan, returning from one of his glorious conquests, passed through one of the cities of Etruria, where he was entertained with much courtesy and magnificence. A certain patrician prepared, in his honor, the most elaborate and ostentatious reception that he could devise. From the families of freedmen he selected the prettiest maidens; he provided them with appropriate garments, and

then, in order that they might form an allegorical representation of all the known world, he gave to each one the products of the country she personified. They were ordered to render homage to Cæsar, first the Roman, then the Barbarian lands, and to offer him their gifts. He put this plan into effect and everything was progressing wonderfully—but whether it was because one aspirant, who could not be disdained, was left out in the distribution of the rôles, or because the arrangement and sequence, which the dances were to follow, required one more person, the fact is that it was necessary to increase the number of participants by one.

All the countries of the world had already been included. It was doubtful how to overcome this difficulty. The patrician, a well-read man, went to the bookcase and took out a copy of Seneca's tragedies. He searched for the passage in the *Medea* which contains some verses that are famous to-day for their prophetic inspiration. He spoke of the poet's supposition of the existence of an unknown land. Future generations would find it by crossing the mysterious ocean, far beyond Plato's submerged Atlantida.

The patrician proposed that since one country was lacking this dreamt-of land should complete the allegory. It seemed anything but a desirable destiny to be the representative of a land about which nothing could be affirmed, not even its existence, while the other rôles gave a chance for picturesque and significant representations, worthy of praise in eloquent words. But there was one maiden who, renouncing her previous rôle, asked for this humble one. She was the youngest of the group and her name was Leuconoc. It was not known in what way to characterize her part with appropriate dress, so it was agreed that she should wear an airy, white costume,—white as a virgin page.

The day arrived and the festivity commenced. After par-

ticipating in various dances, the lands, nobly personified, paraded before the lord of the world. Each one presented her gifts.

Rome appeared first in almost masculine form. This was the type of beauty of her representative. She walked like a goddess. Her glance was commanding, every movement and action, majestic. She offered the earth as her tribute. Following her, as the mother follows her more stately daughter, came Greece, crowned with myrtle. What she said was worthy of being engraved in a tablet of marble. Then came Italy. She spoke in sweet accents of the sculptured grace of a land which the sun gilds to the accompaniment of the music of the air. She praised its fertility; mentioned the wheat of Campania, the oil of Venafrò and the Falernian wine. Light-haired Gaul, laden with the fruits of peace-time, her primitive fury laid aside, displayed the products of the Saone and the Rhone. Iberia presented her flocks, her horses, her mines. Girded with barbaric decorations, Germany advanced and eulogized her thick furs, transparent amber, and the blue-eyed giants, sought after by the circus in the woods of Carbonaria and Hircinia. Britain said that in her Casiterides, there was a metal that gave firmness to bronze. Illyria, famous for her abundant harvests; Thrace, who raised horses as swift as the wind; Macedonia, whose mountains are chests of rich minerals, yielded their treasures. Behind them, last in line, came Thule, who offered both fire and snow, thanks to the daring spirit of the sailor Pytheas. Then came the procession of the Asiatic lands. Syria, in a body of graceful beauty, spoke of the laurels of Daphne and the pleasures of Antioch. Asia Minor joined the splendors of the Orient and the beauties of Ionia in double tribute, holding out the Phrygian flute between both offerings, like the fulcrum of a balance. Babylonia boasted of the splendor of her past glories. Persia, mother of

the fruits of Europe, cheerfully offered seeds of rare quality. Great was India when she told of mountains and colossal rivers; when she invoked precious stones, cotton, marble, the plumage of parrots, pearls; when she named hundreds of precious plants; the ebony that Vergil praised, amomum and malabathrum, braziers of rare perfumes, and the miraculous tree whose fruit makes one live for two hundred years. . . . Palestine offered olives and vineyards. Phoenicia took delight in her purple. Arabia was proud of her gold. Mesopotamia mentioned the thick forests where Alexander cut the wood for his ships. China showed her pride in an exquisite piece of silk; and Taprobana, upon which the double monsoon blows, in fragrant cinnamon. Then came the countries of Africa. Egypt, centuries old, led the procession. She spoke of her pyramids, her sphinxes and colossal works of architecture, of the new awakening of her grandeur in the city where an illuminated tower marks the port for the sailors. Cirenaica spoke of the charm of her serenity, that made her a haven where epicureans came to die. Carthage, whom Augustus rebuilt from ruins, told of her new splendor. Numidia said she supplied marble for palaces, wild beasts for the circus. Ethiopia asserted that she was the country of cinnamon and myrrh, of the race of pigmies and dwarfs of thousands of years old. The Islands of the Blessed, last of the known world, reminded the assemblage that in their bosom the mansion of eternal felicity awaited the souls of the just.

Lastly, with consummate grace and divine candor, came Leuconoe. In no way did she appear to form a part of the living and symbolic harmony. She wore only an airy white robe, white as a virgin page. At that moment however no one envied her in spite of the radiance of her beauty. Cæsar asked the reason for her presence and, when he discovered it,

he was disturbed to see such beauty with so unfortunate a destiny.

"Leuconoe," he said with kindly irony, "a great rôle has not fallen to your lot. Your unkind fortune willed that reality should fall to the lot of the others, while you must be content with the fiction of the poet. I admire your sweet submission; I am pleased with your homage, since you are beautiful. What can you tell me of the country you represent, if you are to avoid deceiving me? What offerings do you bring me from there? What can you assure me exists in your chimerical land?

"Space," Leuconoe answered with charming simplicity.

Everyone smiled.

"Space," repeated Cæsar, "that's true enough! But is the space in that unknown land, if it exists, unpleasant or enjoyable, sterile or fertile? Perhaps it does not even exist. Far away where the poet pretends it is, there may be only the sea or perhaps the frightful void. Who doubts that there is space in the sea or in the abyss? Leuconoe," he continued with greater animation, "your answer has a sublime significance. It has more than one, if you should examine it. Your reply has declared the mysterious superiority of dreams over what is certain and tangible, because in human life there is no greater good than hope nor any reality which is not improved by the sweet vagueness of dreams. But besides this, your answer embodies a beautiful watch-word for our will, a vigorous stimulant for our daring. For the strong there is no limit where the incentive for action ends. Where there is space, there, also, is room for our glory. Where there is space, there is an opportunity for Rome to triumph and enlarge."

Thus Cæsar spoke. He drew from his breast a huge emerald brooch; one of the largest and finest of Egypt. Pinning it on the girl's bosom, he left it, like a gleam of hope, on her white



robe and finished by saying, "Let the prize be for the unknown land; let the prize be for Leuconoe!"

§ 18. *Space, space; that is what is left for you . . .*

Space, space, that is what is left for you when hope, with definite color and shape, concrete ideals and the assurance of an ascertained aptitude, has abandoned you in the midst of life's journey. Space—but not that space where winds and birds fly high above you with their better wings; but within yourself, in the immensity of your soul, is the proper space for your wings. There lies an infinite expanse to conquer, while life lasts, an expanse always capable of being conquered, always worthy to be conquered. . . . To imagine that there is no more within you than that which you can now perceive in the tremulous light of your consciousness is to think that the ocean ends out there where the horizon screens it from your eyes' reach. Incomparably more vast is the ocean than the vision of the eyes; our being incomparably deeper than the intuition of consciousness. What lies revealed on the surface is frequently not only a meager part, but the most ordinary, miserable part of our being. Grant me an opportunity and I will draw powers from you that will astound and magnify you. Your weariness of spirit, your despair, and that sense of the vacuity in your self are not different from that of thousands of souls just before the transfiguration that raised them to exalted virtue or creative genius or heroism. If twenty hours before a hero became (before he resolutely and efficaciously devoted himself to become) a hero, or an apostle an apostle, or an inventor an inventor, a clairvoyant had told them their imminent destinies, how often would they have shrugged their shoulders or smiled with bitter incredulity! Grant me the opportunity and I shall make you great; not be-

cause I may instil something not already present into you, but because I shall make what lies hidden in your soul sprout forth and show itself. Drills and picks can help you, at first, but the mine is in you alone. The situation is similar to that of the painter about whom another painter said: the artist does not create his picture, he merely restricts himself to drawing aside the curtains which prevented our seeing it while the canvas was blank. To discover and bring to the surface of the soul that unknown richness is your work and mine. To shed light within ourself for introspection and inner experience—this is the means to opening the way to some happy occasion, effected by the force of circumstances. A difficult task is this of knowing oneself—who can doubt it? It is a task exposed to a thousand pitfalls. But is not the end that is offered to those who strive to know themselves worth all the treasures of the will? Is there anything that interests you more than discovering what is in yourself and nowhere else but in yourself? There is a land that was created for you alone; an America whose only possible discoverer is you yourself. In your gigantic project, you need not fear rivals to dispute your glory nor conquerors to usurp your riches.

§ 19. *Knowledge of Oneself as an Antecedent of Action.*  
*Amiel and Marcus Aurelius*

To penetrate into one's own consciousness, to try to know one's own soul; but not by inactive contemplation nor for the vainglory of pedantry or sophistication; not like the one who disdains reality, and, turning his back on the hundred roads, that the world offers for knowledge and activity, focuses his eyes on the sanctum of the soul, and remains there both a spectator and spectacle at the same time. This continual analysis of what happens within us, this delay before the mirror

of our consciousness, is the vainest, saddest occupation in life; just as the delay of a warrior, who, instead of hastening to battle, stops to admire his carriage and his equipment in a limpid stream, is vain and fatal. These are the subtle poisons that paralyze Amiel's soul and reduce him to an ineffective critic of the most trivial deeds of his consciousness, a criticism which destroys all spontaneity of feeling, and enervates all energy of the will. Who has expressed how fatal is that waste of time and of the energies of the mental faculties as well as this modern, diligent analyst of himself? The soul that, in sterile quietude, employs itself in tearing into bits whatever it thinks, feels and does *not* act, is like "a grain of wheat that can no longer germinate and be a fecund plant because it has been ground into flour." Certainly! All this is true, but I am speaking to you of the self-knowledge that is an antecedent of action; of that self-knowledge in which action is not only the object and the standard, but also the organ of such knowledge. How can he, who has not proven the blades of his will in the world's battles, know as much as he ought to know about himself? There is a way of knowing himself that is neither exasperating desire, nor procrastinating delight, but a living work creditable to our perfection. It does not incapacitate us like the former for the exercises of the will, but on the contrary strengthens and assures us. It consists of observing in order to reform; of extracting all possible advantage from our natural gifts; of maintaining harmony between our powers and our projects and descending to the depths of the soul. There virtualities and dispositions lie hidden; we withdraw from the profundity the materials that action applies to their adequate end and employs to make us stronger and better; like the man who builds his house with stone from his own quarry, or the man who forges his sword with iron from his own mine.

Amiel presents to us an inner contemplation for no further end than that of the melancholy and contradictory pleasure which emanates from it. Let us recall the august personality of Marcus Aurelius and his constant examination of himself, that was not dissipated in vain introspection but resulted in acts of a fruitful, affirmative will, which wove one of the most beautiful of human lives. Let us take as a comparison to distinguish between both kinds of intimate experience the *Meditations* of the immortal Emperor and the *Diary* of the sad Genevan Hamlet.

#### § 20. *Social Suggestion*

When you become a part of a crowd, which a storm of passion sweeps through the street, you feel that your personality, like a leaf lifted by the wind, is left to the mercy of that terrific force. The crowd that carries you forward and regulates the rhythm of your steps by its material movement governs with equal strength the movements of your sensibility and your will. If some condition of your natural character hinders you from coöperating with what the monster sometimes asks and does, that condition is inhibited and disappears. It is a derangement or an enchantment of your soul, and afterwards, you leave the heart of the crowd; you return to your former being and perhaps you are surprised at what you said and did.

Blame not the crowd alone, which the passion of an hour gathered and agitated in the tumult of the street. All human society is, in a sense, a crowd. All society to which you are chained robs you of a part of yourself and substitutes a flash of the gigantic *personality* that is born from its great masses. So, how many things that you think your own, essentials of yourself, are no more than unsuspected impositions from the

soul of society that surrounds you! And who is free from this power? Even those who appear to be educators, leaders of the human masses, are usually nothing but the docile instruments of something which each one of them thinks worthy to react upon him. In their ostentatious liberty, in their passion for originality with which they, facing the *chorus*, strive to assert their emancipated personalities, perhaps there works the suggestion of the same hidden divinity. We call that liberty, that originality, *genius*, when they reach such a point that they can be considered entirely true. But how rarely are they true to such a degree! How often is the contribution, with which individual thought seems to bring new elements to the common store, nothing but a restitution of those ideas which he has slowly and quietly absorbed. Thus whoever judges by material appearances must believe that it is the rivers that supply the sea with water since they empty into it while it is the sea that yields the water which forms the rivers' sources.

## §21. *The Fictitious "I"*

This sorcery that the rest of humanity works upon each one of us explains many frivolous tendencies in our personality, which deceive, not only the eyes of others, but also those inner eyes with which we see ourselves.

Often this penetrative virtue of environment does not succeed in piercing or even reaching the core of the soul. If it did it would unite with our individuality, which would extract from it whatever might be associated with it without the possibility of decharacterizing us. Thus would it enrich rather than impoverish our personality. But it stops outside of the soul like a cloud or a veil or a tunic. It is merely a ghost, but it is deceiving enough to make that same body in whose

consciousness it is lodged believe it a reality and a substance of its own being. Beneath it lies the living rock, the rock of originality, the rock of truth, unknown, perhaps forever, even until death! . . . In every group of human beings the majority is composed of souls who have no other "I" consciousness; each one believes he fits into the mechanical order of the whole. This does not mean, however, that there does not exist in them the potential, real, true "I" capable of revealing itself and definitely predominating over the other, although it may not be marked by the superior originality that is an attribute of genius, if only the mode of life changes and abandons that state in which the false personality flourishes like a parasitic plant or rather if the soul succeeds in divorcing itself for a time from the tyranny of environment with the defenses and bulkwarks of solitude.

## § 22. *The Inscription on the Pharos of Alexandria*

The first and greatest of the Ptolemies decided to build, on the island facing Alexandria, a lofty and arrogant tower; on its top there was to be an ever-glowing fire to guide the sailor and to symbolize the light that the illustrious city shed over the world. Sostratus, an artist capable of an olympic conception, was the one chosen to translate that idea into stone. He selected white marble; he planned in his mind the model, simple, severe, majestic. On the highest rock of the island he laid the foundation of the structure and as the marble ascended the path to the sky Sostratus' enthusiastic heart followed it. High up there on the vertex, which he anticipated as his ideal goal, he discerned glory. Each stone, a sigh; each finished form, an ecstasy. When the tower was completed, the artist, contemplating his work with rapture, thought that this was his destined task. What he had created with genial

daring was the Pharos of Alexandria that antiquity regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world. Ptolemy, after admiring the work of the artist, observed that one thing was lacking: an inscription that, conspicuously located on the beacon, would immortalize his royal name as the originator of this idea. Then Sostratus, forced to obey but jealous in his love for the marvel of his genius, conceived a way by which posterity, that grants glory, would read his name, rather than that of the king, on the everlasting marble. He covered the surface of the marble with a false surface of lime and sand and on it he inscribed Ptolemy's name but underneath, on the hard and shining surface of the stone, he engraved his own name. The inscription remained a deception to the pride of the Maecenas during his lifetime. Then the destructive ravishes of time began to appear . . . until the day the mortar was scraped away and the name of the king crumbled to dust. Once the mask of lime had been broken, instead of the king's name, the name of Sostratus was revealed in heavy characters, which he had engraved with a vengeance. And the vindictive inscription lasted as long as the monument itself; firm as justice and truth; burnished by the light of the sky on its lofty field that could be sensed not only by men but even by the wind and the rain.

§ 23. *That is not you!*

A sudden impulse of sincerity and liberty can do for you what the justificative work of time did for the inscription on the Pharos of Alexandria. Such an impulse carries you to the depths of your soul, out of the yoke of imitation and custom, beyond persistent suggestion that imposes upon you ways of thinking and feeling and loving that are like the isochronal rhythm of the herd's tread. Vanity, artificiality and imitation

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will crumble into light dust and fall from the surface of your soul. Then perhaps for the first time will you know the truth about yourself. You will awake, as if from the long sleep of a somnambulist. Your weariness and exhaustion (and other people's too) are perhaps a product of the fictitious personality that you don to go into the world's theater. That false personality has made you incapable of initiative or reaction. But, underneath, lies the fresh, crystal-clear fountain of your true personality, all of you, able to blossom into life, joy and love, if you will remove the thick brushwood that hinders and paralyzes your impulse. There is the *you*, there, not in that impoverished field, which now shines in the radiance of your consciousness. Why do you call what a specter feels and does *you*? Up to this very instant it has used your mind to think, your tongue to speak, your limbs to move about in the world. You are its automaton, its docile instrument, with no movement which is not its reflex, no word which is not its submissive echo. That is not *you*! That which steals your name is not *you*! It is nothing but a vain shadow that enslaves you and deceives you! It is like that other specter that usurps the place of your personality, and instils foolish fictions into your head while you sleep.

#### § 24. *The Multitude Who do not Know Themselves*

There are men, very many men, huge multitudes of them, who die without ever knowing their true, fundamental selves. They know only the surface of the soul where their consciousness stirred not even that part of the soul which lies exposed to the air, just as a boat glides over the surface of the water penetrating only a few spans below the face of the deep. Nor does the idea that it might be possible to know something about themselves that they do not already know



ever occur to the majority of men. What they do not know is, perhaps, the very truth that would purify them, the strength that would free them, the wealth that would make their souls shine like silver. By natural law, a human soul could give more of itself than its consciousness thinks and perceives; much more than its will converts into work. Imagine how much unused energy, how many noble aptitudes and ill-used gifts an expiring life must carry with it into the secret place whose seal no one has broken! . . . To grieve at this would be as just as to grieve at forces in action or in consciousness preceding action which death interrupts and wastes away. How many spirits are dissipated in sterile living or reduced to the theatricality of a rôle that they illusively thought was part of their nature! It all happens because they know not the safe path of inner observation, because they have an incomplete, if not absolutely false, idea of themselves, because they adjust their thought, their action, even the flight of their dreams, to these fictitious limits. How easy it is for the consciousness of our real being to be deafened by the noise of the world and for the noblest of our destinies, the best that is virtually in us to be shipwrecked with it! How great must be the insipidity of one who reaches the edge of the tomb without knowing whether there was within his soul a treasure which, either because he did not suspect it or because he did not look for it, he has never known and has lost forever!

#### § 25. *Peer Gynt*

Who has expressed that sentiment of a life which nears its end, without having once been able to transform its forces into a lasting achievement, better than Ibsen, and where can it be found clearer than at the end of *Peer Gynt*, which to

me is the master-stroke of that formidable white bear?

Peer Gynt has journeyed all over the world, his mind filled with ambitious dreams, but he lacks the will to dedicate the earnestness of his soul to any one of them, and thus to conquer the force of personality which does not perish. When he sees his hair white after having wasted its gold in futile excitement, pursuing chimeras that vanished like smoke, this prodigal of himself desires to return to his native country.

On the way to the mountain of his village the withered leaves, fallen from the trees, whirl in his path. "We are," they tell him, "the words thou shouldst have uttered. Thy timid silence condemns us to die in the furrow." On the way to the mountain of his village a tempest breaks on him. The voice of the wind tells him, "I am the song thou shouldst have sung and thou didst not sing, though, exalted in the depths of thy heart, I waited a sign from thee." On the way to the mountain the raindrops which, after the storm, remained upon the forehead of the traveller, tell him, "We are the tears that thou shouldst have wept, and that never appeared in thy eyes; fool, if thou believed that happiness was thine because of that!" On his way to the mountain the grass that his foot trod upon tells him, "We are the thoughts which ought to have dwelled in thy mind, the works which ought to have felt the impulse of thine arm, the resolution which should have animated thy heart." And when the sad man thought that he had ended his journey, the Button-moulder, that name of the justice which guards and regulates the integrity of the moral order in the world, like the ancient Nemesis, stops him to ask where are the fruits of his soul, for those souls that yield no fruit must be remelted in the huge furnace of all souls and upon its past incarnation must settle oblivion, which is the eternity of nothingness.

Is not this a proper allegory to make many souls, which never have served under the flag of Evil, taste for the first time the bitterness of remorse? Peer Gynt! Peer Gynt! thou art legion of legions!

§ 26. *Our personal complexity. Let no one say: "I am like this, so shall I always be"*

But I admit that what is now reflected in your consciousness and manifests itself through your sentiments and your actions may be something which rises out of the actual development of your being and not through a mere accident. Even so, you are not justified in affirming anything conclusive and absolute about that reality which is not, in any of us, a closed field, an immovable permanence, but rather a perpetual becoming, a continual change, an undulating sea. The knowledge of oneself does not allow one to conclude: "I am like this, so shall I always be." That knowledge is the reward of a task which is daily renewed, like faith which is tried by contradiction, like bread which work sanctifies. The tendencies which we consider most fundamental and characteristic in the personality of each one of us are never present without some interruption, either languor or divergence; and even in their stability as a summary or mean of moral manifestations how far from being capable of a perpetual belief in the future, how far from the certainty that that passion which wholly dominates us to-day will not some time yield to another different or antagonistic one which, by the natural development of its influence, will upset the whole order of our moral life! He who would attempt to obtain for his soul a unity, absolutely foreordained, free from perplexities and struggles, would suffer the illusion of the demented hunter who, upon penetrating a

dense, tropical forest, armed with all kind of weapons, should insist, with delirious frenzy, on extinguishing all the life that existed in it, and should hundreds of times repeat his bloodthirsty pursuit until after each attempt, the sound of footsteps or the rustling of wings or a roar, or a warble, or the buzzing of a gnat should convince him of the impossibility of effecting complete peace and silence. King don Alfonso the Wise called such men *bosques de espesura*.

There is ever in our spirit a part that is irreconcilable to discipline, be that discipline good or bad, active or inert. Seeds of discontent and unmanageable propensities always wrestle within us, and usually their awakening coincides with the time when we found ourselves most deeply immersed in that passion which gave a sure impulse to our life; in that conviction or faith which concentrated and guided it; in the tranquillity which seemed to us to have signed forever the peace of our inner conflicts.

The philosophy of the human mind, the investigation into the history of man and nations, the judgment of some character, aptitude or virtue, a plan for education or reform, let all these not take into consideration this complexity of the moral being, let them not cherish the prospect of truth or of certainty.

### § 27. *The thinker and the slave*

It happened that, a guest at a country house in Megara, a fugitive from Athens, accused of having attempted to conceal under his cloak a remembrance of Socrates, the goblet from which the condemned drank the hemlock, withdrew in the late afternoon, to meditate in the seclusion of the vast gardens, where shade and quiet offered an ideal

place for concentration. The ecstasy in his countenance reflected the condition of his soul. Following the training of his teacher, the exile gave himself up to introspection.

Near the place where he sat meditating amid a clump of sad willows, a slave, a captive of Athens or Corinth, from whose face not even the debasement of servitude had been able to completely obliterate the noble stamp of his nature, busied himself in drawing water from a well and emptying it into a neighboring canal. The moment came when the eyes of the guest met those of the slave. The Libyan wind, producer of fever and afflictions, was blowing. Burned by its breath, the slave, after looking cautiously about, ceased his work, dropped his tired arms. He threw his frail body, as if it were his cross, against the curbstone of the well, and said to the thinker: "Pity me, pity me if you are capable of tears, and know, so that you may be better able to pity me, that there now scarcely remains in my memory the trace of having knowingly lived in any other condition than this fatal and slow punishment. See how the chains which I bear bite into my flesh! See how my back is bent! But what aggravates my suffering is that, yielding to a fancy which grows out of boredom and weariness, I cannot keep my eyes from this image of mine which the reflection of the water places before me every time I raise the bucket to the edge of the well. I remain looking at it, looking at it, truly more petrified than that melancholy statue of Hipnos, because it has its eyes fixed on its own shadow only during certain hours of sunlight. In such a way I came to know my youthful countenance, and I see today this mask of anguish, and I shall see how time leaves its imprints on the mask and how the shadows of death approach and touch it. . . . You alone, strange man, have at times succeeded in distracting my gaze with your attitude and sphinx-like pensiveness. Do you in-

dulge in day dreams? Are you planning some heroic deed? Do you converse privately with some god who possesses you? . . . Oh, how I envy your concentration and your quiet! What a sweet thing idleness must be which allows one to muse!"

"This is not the age for conversations with gods, nor for heroic enterprises," answered the thinker. "And as for delightful dreams, they are birds which do not make their nests on barren heights. . . . My purpose is to see within myself. I want to form an exact idea and judgment of this being that is I, of the person for whom I deserve punishment or recompense . . . and in this task I exert myself and suffer more than you. For each image of yours that you raise from the depths of the well, I too raise a new image of myself from the depths of my soul; an image contradictory to the one which preceded it, and which has for its dominant characteristic an act, an intention, a sentiment, which each day of my life presents, as a clue to its history, when it brings it to the mirror of a consciousness burnished by solitude; and the bottom never appears stable and sure beneath the undulation of the images which appear. Here is one of them that seems to crystallize into a firm and precise design; and now a sudden remembrance wounds it, and like a cloud it trembles and vanishes. I will reach extreme old age, but I will never attain even the beginning of the wisdom I seek. You will drain your well; I will not drain my soul. Such is the idleness of thought!"

They heard approaching footsteps; the slave returned to his task, the exile to his; and only the harsh squeaking of the pulley in the well sounded, while the afternoon sun projected the elongated shadows of the thinker and the slave, and joining them formed an angle whose vertex reached the floor of the melancholy statue of Hipnos.

§ 28. *Have you never felt yourself different from your true self?*

Indeed, how varied and complex we are! Has it never happened that you felt yourself different from your true self? Have you never discovered in your consciousness something unknown and strange? Has an act of yours never surprised you after you had done it, on realizing its inconsistency with your trusted past experience built upon a hundred previous actions in your life? Have you never found in yourself things which you did not expect and have you never failed to find those which you considered most assured and certain? And fixing your glance upon an objective behind your eyes, there where almost all internal light is lost, have you never caught sight of a vague and confused shadow of *someone other than yourself*, floating about without submitting to the power of your conscious will; a furtive shadow, comparable to that which glides over the bosom of tranquil waters when a cloud or bird passes over them?

Have you never said to yourself, straining your memory, if that strange intention which once traversed my soul reached the border of my will and stopped, as at the chariot races the triumphant driver skimmed by the column of his goal without touching it; if this inconsequential, eccentric act which once shattered the equilibrium of my conduct, for good or for evil, if both this intention and this act had been, within the sum of my actions, not fugitive deviations, but new points of departure, how different might I be today! How different my personality, my history and people's opinion of me!

§ 29. *The impossibility of maintaining a constant uniformity*

Not the highest attainable moral perfection, which means the harmonious subordination of inferior tendencies to reason; nor the most primitive simplicity which shows the ever-present trace of instinct in human consciousness; nor the blindest, most pertinacious passion that completely absorbs the soul and drives it, as long as life lasts, towards a single, rash impulse,—no one of these has the power to prevail over the complexity of our nature to such an extent as to be able to annul the diversity, the inconsistency and the contradiction which are rooted in the depths of our being.

Is there any limpid, serene consciousness through which there has not sometimes passed a momentary shadow, faithless to the established order of life? . . . Let us mount to the sublime heights where the divine and the human meet. Let us go up to Jesus and question Him. Within the bounds of His infinite love there was also room for despair, for discouragement and for weariness. Returning from the Passover, just as He was about to be crucified, the Redeemer reached the Mount of Olives. . . . And there one half of His soul struggles with the other; there was the anguish of doubt, the sweat of death, and the rebellion wherein His mortal being endangers the part of Him which is pure love and life; there was the world held in the suspense of doubt, at its most solemn and tragic moment,—would it awaken to light or collapse in darkness? Who, if he bears this in mind, will think himself capable of attaining an eternal brightness or of being constant in his desire for the supreme good? The words of Kempis show his believers how a scorn of temptation is a vanity, even in the pious. "Never," says this keen assessor of faithful



souls, "did I know a man, however pious, whom divine consolation did not at some time fail."

And just as this discord enters into the life of a saint, so also does it touch the soul of the primitive and candid hero, who rolls, unhampered, like a stone down a slope, straight to his goal; so again, it touches the simple soul of the peasant whose mind moves in a less complex world of tendencies and wants. The fierceness of Achilles melts into tears of tender pity when Priam prostrates himself at his feet. Sancho does not seem to be the same, but he *is*—he is the same with that sameness which arises from an imitation of Nature and not from artificial uniformity—in incidents like that of his immortal departure from his island.

In contrast to the *revealing act*, according to which Taine's logical mind attempted to deduce from a single isolated act the complete knowledge of a character, from a single thread the entire web of a personality; in contrast to the *revealing act* and to the deductions of Taine's method, there is reproduced, often enough, in human life the *act* which we can call *contradictory*: the act in which one's personality manifests itself beneath a mask which is different from and antithetical to that which dominates his character and guides his life.

§ 30. *Art can reflect the individual's complexity only to a certain point*

An intuitive and complete vision of a personality, which includes together with the faculty which constitutes its center, together with the dominant tendency which stamps it with expression, all the sentiments and secondary impulses—that part of moral life which is developed more or less separately from that never absolute authority—is the essential requirement both of the novelist and the dramatic poet who

portray new souls, and of the historian who reproduces or interprets those that existed. But only up to a certain point can art reflect what is contradictory and dissonant in human complexity, since it is the very nature of artistic creation to require harmony and unity, and to reduce all that is discordant and diffused to a synthesis in which there may shine the essence, the very substance of a reality, free from unimportant accidents that have no representative force.

The diversity of elements with which the artist takes care to surround the fundamental note of a character, in order to separate it from artificiality and abstraction, is composed, through the intrinsic necessity of his art, of a most perfect harmony which is realized only in the complexity of a real person. Nevertheless, when a great creator of characters, endowed with the supreme instinct of human truth, lends his warmth to an imaginary person and makes life seethe fully and vigorously in him, it is then that dissonance and contradiction are eager to assert themselves as if by the very truth of the conception. They assert themselves without harming the artistic effect or lessening its intensity; they rather enhance it by the palpitating similarity between artistic fiction and Nature's work. This is true of the immense world of Shakespeare, the most powerful moulder of human clay, whose creations, although they are magnetized by an energetic and well-characterized passion that makes them immortally significant, show at the same time all the contradiction and inconsistency of our nature, alternating the radiance of the ideal with the turpitude of lust, olympic nobility with abject vulgarity, heroic impulses with vile sloth. I spoke a moment ago about the Redeemer of the world. Now we could not retain the impression of *human* reality, although unique and sublime, nor the very keen interest which results from our seeing how such an ineffable light radiates from a *mortal*

being, in that figure so beautifully evoked by the candid words of the evangelists, if He did not have the inconsistencies which are irreconcilable with that immutability which is the essence of God. This immutability is capable of wrecking our minds, of exalting us to adoration, of fascinating and humiliating us, but it is incapable of exciting the deep human sympathy by which we recognize the presence of our nature in Him who, above anyone else, raised it up, even when His hope was eclipsed in the Garden of Olives, when His constancy suffered temptation on the top of the mountain, when His gentleness was gone and the whip, wielded by Him in a fit of anger akin to Isaiah's, cracked on the merchants' foreheads, when the desperation of mocked hunger gnawed at His mortal flesh and He uttered a foolish and meaningless curse to the barren fig-tree, when hope again abandoned Him on the cross and He rebuked the Father who had forsaken Him. . . . It is in inconsistencies such as these, in such discords that we find naturalness and truth, and this warmth and fragrance of life is felt in the greatest and purest of men.

### § 31. *Communicating wells. Gusts*

The infinite and discordant variety of things and events gives our fundamental complexity even more chances to appear. And to the influence of things that happen around us, can be added, perhaps, other more remote and hidden ones. . . . Our soul does not stand upon time like a tank with a sealed bottom that allows no air to enter from beneath. We should picture it rather like an abysmal and unfathomable well which is sunk in the dark depths of dead time. For the soul of each one of us is the terminus where an immense number of souls end: those of our parents, of our grandparents; those of the second, of the tenth, of the hun-

dredth generation. . . . Souls opening one upon another into the very depths of time, until the end of human genesis, like abysses which issue and generate one from the other; and as one descends, each abyss changes into two, for each new-born soul comes directly from two souls. Thus, the life of a hundred generations flows under the roots of your consciousness and is always in contact with you. All dead souls persist in you. And the way you guide them in the immediate future will give your children's souls immortality whilst they perpetuate the essence and compendium of their own acts to which they have added yours. What is the mysterious, instinctive mandate which operates within you without the interference of your will and consciousness if not a voice which, transmitted by means of those communicating wells, rises to your soul from the depths of an immemorial past, and compels you to act within the bounds of ancestral custom?

But other echoes, mutable and unorganized, like those of instinct and those which are announced by the most personal manifestations of inner activity—do they not perhaps reach our soul from remote or neighboring abysses? They are the echoes of the thoughts and feelings of a thousand ancestors, scattered through different parts of the world, linked with other ages, modeled by the habits of a hundred different vocations and activities: shepherds and warriors, farmers and sailors, masters and servants, worshipers of various idols. And these echoes which perhaps never become fused into a perfect and harmonious whole, however active the concentrated force of one's own personality may be, and however convergent our heritage may be, are not these echoes responsible for many of the dissonances and contradictions of our moral life? . . . I think of them now as nourishing a perpetual conflict with the consciousness records without knowing its cause or instigation; now as appearing in a noiseless and

secret conflict which the mind scarcely perceives, until perhaps an echo, distinct from the others, bursts suddenly forth into an idea and stirs the heart and the will, producing one of those strange divergences from our usual self which we adequately and expressively are wont to call *gusts*.

Gusts; a melancholy suggestion, a religious tremor, an outburst of heroism, a perverse temptation, a flash of inspiration, a hint of madness; a thousand vague and incongruent things, dreams which surge from the secrecy of the soul to lure us, for a moment, away from the beaten path of daily life only to be lost immediately in the monotony and routine of hours which know no rebellious impulse. We are, on these strange occasions, like one who, seated at the brink of an abyss, hears from its mysterious pit, breaking their protective silence, now an awful clap of thunder, now the vague tolling of bells, now a mournful sigh, now the murmur of wings, now the droning of torrents. . . .

§ 32. *Advantages of the multiplicity of our intimate being*

In view of our complexity, our moral instability and the multitude of our virtual forms, how easy it is for even the slightest exterior force to awaken our soul! How many different aspects this thought has and how fertile and suggestive it is! To the *dilettante* it offers only the attraction of curious delight and pleasant vagrancy. To the hermit and the stoic it is a terrifying thought; it brings to them the image of the quick-sands upon which our personal unity rests when they have always believed that a firm bronze base supported it. But he who, unlike the *dilettante*, conceives life as real action; and who, unlike the stoic and hermit, conceives it as a process of correction and continuous change, values the propitious advantages in the multiplicity of our intimate being.

The harmony between opposite traits and between contradictory forms of sensibility in the make-up of an individual, the simultaneous appearance or an alternate succession, within the unity of one's consciousness, of usually separate elements, is a powerful ferment of originality. From this harmony there often arises new visions of things; the perception of unexpected relations; stimuli to investigation and liberty; ways of seeing and feeling which perhaps bring with them a consistent and fertile innovation that is communicable to others: a *spontaneous variation* which, in the development of society, as in the development of natural species, creates and makes predominant a new type. The secret of superior originalities is usually either concord or everlasting strife between contradictory traits. There will be a hundred minds in the person whose divergent impulses of belief and desire indefinitely maintain the sterile anarchy of indecision and doubt. Another hundred will blot out this anarchy by returning to the most powerful suggestion among those that work with society and tradition: for the triumph of one of those ideas and inclinations which vie among themselves without modifying or extending it at all, henceforth reduces the attempts of the others to ephemeral and vain deviations. But there will be a mind which will rise from inner conflict and rivalry to a higher plane, to an unknown position that reveals horizons; whether this be in the intellectual sphere by the discovery of a synthesis, a theory or a style; or in the moral sphere by the example of an unusual gesture in one's action or conduct.

### § 33. *Prophetic moments*

For him who feels the need of an intimate reform, for him who finds it necessary to crush the habit or inclination which holds his moral personality under yoke, for him who sees

exhausted the energies which he knows he possesses, the complexity and variability of our nature is a pledge of hope, is a happy promise of rebirth and regeneration. Because, granted that there is a certain watchful, guiding power of the will for restraining or encouraging the movements of that infinite spontaneity, it is to them that we owe our power of independence and renewal. Each one of the momentary deviations or discords, a burst of enthusiasm which imparts warmth to a listless existence, a guess or an intuition which dispels the shadows from an obscure and dull mind, a spring of joy which flows forth into a vast wasteland of sad hours, a beneficent inspiration which breaks the unity of an existence consecrated to evil—each one of these momentary deviations is like a sudden light which opens upon a clear horizon and offers, through the redeeming efficacy of the will, a point of possible departure. To see and to utilize such discords are the chief means of developing one's culture. And when our attention and will do not take heed of them . . . this felicitous inconstancy, this rebellious moment, is it then lost in oblivion and darkness and the usual tenor of our existence resumed? Have they gone never to return? Who knows! How often have they returned . . . returned from the unknown depths within you, where they wandered through mysterious byways, and their reappearance has been not merely an echo which vainly rings in your memory, or a new whim that lives but a fleeting moment, but indeed an efficacious impulse, a firm and lasting will, a messenger of redemption, the dawn of a new life!

The most profound moral changes are usually announced, long before their arrival, by one of these moments which leave no more trace than a flash of lightning, which we confuse with our many other ephemeral inconsistencies, an obscure and unknown precursor, a prophet without any visible

sign, who moves, deep within us, lost in the current of ordinary things.

§ 34. *The departing ship*

Behold the solitude of the sea. An impenetrable boundary encloses it, touching the sky everywhere, except where the sea-coast is the limit. A ship steams proudly off from the shore, throbbing noisily. The sun is sinking; a light wind urges, "Let's be off!", soft clouds float by. The ship pushes forward leaving a black trail against the sky, a white trail upon the sea. It advances, advances over the calm waves. It has reached the line where sea and sky meet. It drops below the line. Now only the tall mast is visible; now this last trace of the ship disappears. And the impenetrable line resumes its mysterious aspect. Who would not believe that yonder, where that line lies, there is a real end, the edge of an abyss? But behind it the sea widens, a vast deep sea, even deeper than it is vast; and then, at the other side, there are lands and still other lands colored by the sun of different climes, where diverse races of men dwell; great expanses of land inhabited or deserted, the sublime compass of the world. Somewhere within this infinity lies the harbor toward which your ship has sailed. Perhaps, once arrived there, it may afterwards follow different paths to other places in that boundless expanse and perhaps it may never return as if the mysterious line which it has crossed were really the void where everything ends. . . . But one day, scanning this same mysterious line, you see a rising wisp of smoke, a flag, a mast, a familiar hull. It is the ship homeward bound! It returns as does the faithful horse to his pasture-ground,—perhaps poorer and lighter than when it departed; perhaps wounded by the treacherous waves, or perhaps safe and laden with a precious



cargo. Perhaps in the saddle-bags of its powerful back, it is bringing the tribute of the tropics: delightful perfumes, sweet oranges, precious stones that shine like the sun, or beautiful, soft furs. Perhaps in exchange for those whom it carried away, it is bringing back people of purer heart, of firmer will and of stronger bodies. Glory and good fortune to the ship! If it comes from a more industrious country, perhaps it is bringing forged iron which arms the hand of man for his labor, woolen cloth, rich metal in the round pieces which are the temptation of the world, perhaps fragments of marble and bits of bronze into which human art has breathed the breath of life, or bundles of paper upon which small types have left their imprint, bringing ideas. Glory, glory and good fortune to the ship!

§ 35. *Things that disappear in our internal abyss and then return from it. The motes of the unconscious*

A thought holds your attention for a short while; either you remove it yourself, or it vanishes of its own accord; you can perceive it no longer, but on some remote day it reappears in the bright sunlight of your consciousness, now transfigured into an organic and matured conception, into a conviction capable of supporting itself with all the force of dialectics and the ardor of passion.

A faint doubt clouds your faith; you drive it away, banish it. When least suspected, it returns so strengthened and reënforced, that the entire edifice of your faith suddenly collapses forever.

You read a book that makes you think; you mingle again in the bustle of people and things; you forget the impression the book left on you, and as time passes, you realize that that reading, without your evoking it voluntarily or intentionally,

has so affected you, that your entire spiritual life is impregnated with it and modified accordingly.

You experience a sensation; it vanishes; others come to blot out its echo and memory, just as a wave erases from the shore, the traces left by the preceding one. Some day when you feel an immense and enslaving passion, you surmise that from that forgotten sensation a hidden chain of interior actions has arisen which becomes the center of all the forces of your being. It is like that slender piece of string around which the luxurious foliage of vine gently entwines itself.

All these things are like a ship that leaves, disappears, and later returns laden with rich cargo.

The region of our inner being seems to end where the clearness of consciousness ends, just as the spaciousness of the sea is bounded by the line that borders the sky. We are infinitely vaster, we encompass immensities where, without our knowledge or participation, a thousand painful reactions and transformations take place. Once realized and completed, they appear and surprise us with a modification of our personality whose origin and development we ignore. So would a larva be surprised, if such a thing were possible, when it comes out of its confinement and unfolds in the sun the wings that grew while it was asleep.

In the dark abyss of the soul live things that perhaps we thought had no place there; things that wait in secret or in ambush. Brutal instinct, apparently dominant in a wicked, barbarous nature, breaks loose on occasion into unbridled rage. Righteousness, beguiled by passion, becomes culpable and has to repent. In those depths lies the slave's desire for liberty; he has been accustomed to chains and borne them in dull submission until one day all his grievances overflow and he rebels against his oppressor.

Things that come from still farther away, that will wake

at an opportune moment, are sleeping there. One is the inherited predisposition which appears at the same age as it did in the soul of the grandfather or the father. Another is the fateful apparition of *Ghosts*, the vanishing impressions of infancy that reappear in maturity like the stimulus of a conversion, lasting until death. Such was the emotion of the child Tolstoi before the piety of Gricha, the vagabond.

From far away in that darkness come the sudden intuitions of genius, artist's inspirations and the seer's prophecies; for they divine beauty or truth by an internal elaboration about which they are as ignorant as they are about the changes that take place in the bowels of the earth. Thence also arise the inexplicable depressions and unsolicited joys, which time usually clarifies later by verifying the words of the inner oracle like the prediction of a calamity or the anticipated enjoyment of happiness.

*The Merchant of Venice*.—"In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.

It wearies me, you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn;  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me  
That I have much ado to know myself.

*Salario*.—Your mind is tossing on the ocean;  
There where your argosies with portly sail,  
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,  
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,  
That curtsey to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

*The Merchant of Venice*.—Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it,

My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,  
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate  
Upon the fortune of this present year.  
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

*Salarino*.—Why, then you are in love.

*The Merchant of Venice*.—

Fie, fie!

*Salarino*.—Not in love neither? Then let us say you're sad  
Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy  
For you to laugh and leap, and say you're merry  
Because you are not sad."

Any idea, feeling or action of yours, even the smallest, may be the danger point of an abyss unseen by the inward eye. This forgotten idea is, perhaps, like the boat that looses its bearings, is destroyed by an angry sea, and never returns again. And again, it often resembles the boat that returns laden with treasures. The power of transformation and stimulation contained in those depths is infinite. Consequently in the beginning of the greatest passions and the most heroic undertakings, nothing is encountered except vague indecisions, those weak attempts, pale glimmerings and lazy movements. Even without attention's protection, even without new provocations, they take flight with only the heat and dampness of a fertile and primitive land that spreads beneath the roots of our conscious life.

They are the infinitely little things of thought and sensibility; the innumerable scattered motes floating in our inner air; the vague echoes sometimes heard by the consciousness as if they came from a subterranean hot spring. They are the atoms that are related to the true sentiment, actual or defined, as the spray of the fountain to the water from which it comes.

The subtle and experienced self-analyzer brings them into

the field of observation and, when the psychologist through his art ventures into the recesses of consciousness and brings the most obscure things to light, they look like dancing motes when a ray of sunlight illumines their harmonious dances. Such is the case when Sterne, author of *Tristram Shandy*, discovers with his humorous eye the imperceptible operation of the trivial and unnoticed in everyone's soul and life, its echo in that of others, and its associations and growth, as one might follow the most fragile bubble from the time when it dissolves into the air and becomes part of the invisible vapor until it becomes a cloud pregnant with storms. Or, again, when Marivaux, versed in a thousand painstaking and precious details, observes, as if he were looking through a magnifying glass, the uncertain dawns of a passion, flashes of thought, the gamut of all sentiments, the fluctuations of the vacillating will, the charms of undeclared love, the barely perceptible transition from indifference to love, or from love to disdain: all the *perhaps*, all the *almost* and all the *nearly* of the soul.

What seems to us suddenly spontaneous, as if communicated by a superior power in the brusque changes of our moral life, is, in the majority of cases, only the visible result, the belated maturing of a long action slowly developed in our internal abyss, having for its beginning and impetus a most gentle movement. Hence frequently it is enough for another movement, no less gentle, a vague, subtle excitation, a delicate touch to cause the explosion that reveals a new way of being, a new life. The work was about to crystallize—it awaited only a slight stimulus.

"There is nothing vile in the house of Jupiter," the ancients use to say. Parodying them, we may say: "There is nothing trivial or insignificant in the house of Psyche."

§ 36. *Is there any such thing as a trivial deed? . . . A flight of birds*

But even in the outside world, in the developments and changes that take place there, whether they be real or illusory, is there any act that can be disdained as insignificant? By what right does our very limited knowledge allow us to divide events into the great and the small, into the transcendental and the futile? To gage an act as small with any amount of certainty, we would have to keep in mind the unity of the complex machine of the universe, wherein this act is included and works in harmony with all. An act may be considered small by him who watches it fly toward its target at which it is aimed by a hidden ruling power; but there it may hit and shatter a world! Small indeed is the movement that misses only by an infinitesimal degree the point where two forces might collide, and cause chaos! Small is the atom that you may see in the wind if you strain your eyes, but it is perhaps doomed to overthrow the throne of a god! I am not speaking now, you must remember, of a deed whose smallness, accumulated with that of any other deeds just like grains of sand in a clepsydra, makes a total of great things. I mean rather, that an act that appears singly and isolated both because of the occasion upon which it arrives and the length of time it lasts, decides immediately, with its slightest impulse, the direction of an interminable line of destinies. In the same way as a gentle gust of wind or the hand of a child may change the position of those see-saw rocks which, without their strange equilibrium, could resist the arm of a titan.

Yonder, in the north of America, there is a tremendous organized force, a body endowed with two natures: the paws of a beaver and the head of a buffalo—an empire of power, a republic of liberty.

This organism is the culminating result of the feelings and habits elaborated by a historical race from the other side of the ocean in the course of its centuries of development. But this new race needed a new environment, a new land, and it obtained them. How did it happen that this land was kept for that seed? What is there at the foot of that mountain of the will, that nation of new marvels and wonders, which inspires admiration if not love, or, if not admiration, awe? There is a flight of birds.

Sixty days after their departure Columbus' ships crossed the deserted seas on their journey to the West. The water was calm. Nothing on the horizon; straight and silent as the line of the Sphinx's lips. Boredom and anger in the hearts of the crew. The faith of the dreamer might have prolonged this journey infinitely without a sign of weariness; if it were prolonged only a few days more, the current would have carried him to a land further north of the Gulf. He could hardly control the wrath of his men when one afternoon, Alonso Pinzon, scrutinizing the stubborn solitude, saw against the golden background of twilight a cloud of birds bend the curve of their flight toward the southwest and then disappear again in the abyss beyond the horizon. Doubtless there was land out there where the birds roosted at night; the ships, changing their course, took the direction marked out by the flight. If not for this, Washington Irving was firmly convinced, the future Carolina or Virginia, and not the humble Lucay, would have been greeted by the glorious fleet. The flag of Castile waved over an immense extent of land that steals space from two oceans before it narrows down into the curved

coast line of Mexico; it would have been there that the epic of the Conquerors, which carried its influence into the South, would have played its best rôle. But Walter Raleigh, the Puritans, and the Republic had the flight of some birds for prophetic guidance. What a trivial escutcheon for such great destinies! If in the enormous rolling waves of deeds and ideas that mark the course of History, flights of birds may decide the character and future of governments, with a similar control over the fate of individual existence, flights of birds may be the origin of all that exalts or crushes it; flights of birds may cause the awakening of love, the vocation of heroism, the approach of happiness; flights of birds—the glory that is gained and the faith that is lost!

§ 37. *Seeds that the tree neglects*

Let us imagine a personality or a consciousness in a tree about to bear fruit. The consciousness of the tree chooses among all the seeds that promise the maturing of the blossom; some to be lost and others to live and propagate their kind. To these it sends its best sap; it employs with a most delicate skill all its vital force to make a cover to shelter and protect the chosen seed. The seed grows strong and ripe with the pulp of the fruit clinging to it. In this way the tree has assured the success of the seed in which it places its hope of immortality while the others, forgotten and unprotected, either through the insufficiency or choice of the tree's strength, acquire only weak, meager pods. But the adequate covering of the seed does not determine its chances of fertility. Perhaps the fruit where the selected seed is hidden is torn from the tree by a greedy hand or perhaps the seed of that fruit falls upon sterile ground, while a breath of air may lift the seed fallen from the neglected and ill-formed fruit and



carry it to the shelter of propitious, damp earth that will lovingly protect the seed disinherited by the tree and will make of it a new tree in that place; perhaps a forest, in the course of time. These seeds, the work of the unconscious strength of my tree and an object of scorn and neglect, symbolize the acts which automatically, indifferently and with no idea of their possible values we perform every day of our lives. We force the resources of our minds to achieve the efficacy of actions to which we entrusted our desires and hopes; the others we ignore. But every action has an invisible seed within it; the vital point is enclosed in all of them, the tiniest promise of the future plant. Wind, earth, water, the solicitous train of a cruel Nature, decide the fate of the uncared-for seeds, which may become sterile dust or a mighty forest. . . . Upon which of these seeds does the birth of the new tree depend? With what act of mine am I throwing the seed of my future to the passing wind?

§ 38. *Fruitful strength of an insignificant act*

And just as there is no action whose uselessness may be certain as far as it concerns the life of him who, voluntarily or involuntarily, performs it, so there is no action that may not leave its trace upon the consciousness or destiny of other men. With each action of ours, even the slightest, most trivial and unintentional, we not only plan a link of a chain which may prolong itself and lead to an unforeseen end within our own existence, but we also plan similar chains outside of ourselves. For every action of ours, however trivial it may seem, has an immeasurable potentiality for diffusion and propagation. There is not one among them entirely destitute of that magnetic touch that tends to provoke imitation, and presently to persist in him who imitates it, through that other

imitation of oneself called habit, when we do something we expect, more or less wholeheartedly, that others who see it or hear about it do it too. This is true not only of the smallest actions of a great and powerful will; it is a basic characteristic of the action which, without the knowledge of either the performers or the recipients, can be attributed to the workings of a child's mind, even a beggar's, an invalid's, a fool's or an outcast's.

Besides, who can measure the value of the development of the influence of what one does and says in the soul of another person? Who can calculate it exactly when he does not know the details of the situation peculiar to this soul, within which a most imperceptible motion of no importance to other people can be the thing that disrupts the order in which it reposed or, on the other hand, that may establish and strengthen this order mysteriously fatal or mysteriously opportune?

The old moralists used to speak of the hypocrisy of scandal which attributes a malicious intent to an innocent deed. Who knows what a basis of personal truth there may be in these accusations, suspected of being treacherous and false, when one remembers how surely a word or an image reverberates and sounds strange echoes and fallacious reflections in the Psyche? . . . It happens similarly with the mysterious beginnings of love, faith, hate or doubt. . . . For nothing that works upon the soul from without moves it like an inanimate body whose movements can be foretold exactly, once its invariable resistance and its motor power are known. The characteristic of all life's reactions is spontaneity which establishes a constant disproportion between the exterior impulse and the effects of the impulse, and this disproportion may become immense. . . .

A word . . . a gesture . . . a glance . . . A flash of

lightning is no more certain or swift in its effects than these are upon our soul. Even in the deadening slowness of remorse and grief, how often does the sluggish seed reappear and last until death? Who will not appreciate the meaning that Sully Prudhomme's intense, melancholy thought gives to a vase of flowers which, knocked over by a light breeze, bears its scarcely visible crack like one who feels the glory of suffering, but in the meantime, the liquid that watered the flowers slowly, slowly escapes while the flowers wither and die?

§ 39. *The trivial act and invention*

How beautiful and large can a trivial act grow, especially in discovery and invention, once it is seized from the depths of the spirit by a hypertrophic attention which spies on the movement of reality as a feline eye, dilated in the shadows, awaits the approach of its victim. . . . Newton's apple and Galileo's lamp are nothing but bold-faced capitals at the beginning of many papers in the intellectual history of mankind. A kettle lid jiggled by steam set Worcester on the trail of the force that was to make the locomotive humble space. A paper suspended in the air above a candle gave Montgolfier the idea for aerial navigation. Haüy accidentally dropped some prisms of spars on the floor of his laboratory and, watching them set into symmetrical patterns, he discovered the laws of crystallography. Louis de Barken, burgomaster of Bruges, for childish amusement, rubbed two diamonds together and so he unexpectedly happened upon the cutting and polishing of the most precious of stones. Chevalier de Mere questioned Pascal about the game of dice—in answering him, Pascal formulated the law of probabilities. In artistic invention there is the same greatness of triviality clutched by the claws of observation. Leonardo could find no way to paint Judas in

the *Last Supper* as he wished—one day as he was walking along the street, he noticed a peasant, and the figure he dreamed of in vain stood before him in the flesh. On a journey through Italy Milton saw a puppet-play, and there the sublime conception of *Paradise Lost* took form in his mind.

§ 40. *How the vocation is rooted in the unconscious*

From the depths of the soul comes a mysterious voice distinct and clear above the clamor of external voices, that tells the soul the place and task which have been assigned to it in the order of things. This voice, this personal instinct, that works with no less skill and efficacy than those instincts common to everyone, is the instinct of *vocation*. A true spur, a real *sting* (which is the original meaning of instinct) anticipates conscious, reflective selection and puts the soul on the road to its special aptitude. Aptitude makes use of instinct, as the birds use the *sense of orientation* by which they find their way through the spacious air. Whither does the bird fly, unguided over the vast plain, through labyrinth of forests, over the towers of cities? To a hut, to its nest, to a certain destination? Similarly without knowledge of reality, without experience of its forces, or comparison of its possibilities, the soul, seeing life's horizon open before it, goes naturally toward the field where its activity will be appropriate and fruitful. Sometimes this instinct appears so early and so prior to all experience that it resembles the intuition of a reminiscence. Other times it manifests itself so suddenly and so boldly, when the soul is already engaged in the business of the world, that it suggests the idea of a real *vocation*—that is to say, of a true voice that calls out, "Follow me, O Matthew!" Finally, at other times, after indecisions which betray the absence of the unequivocal and obvious knowledge of instinct, the voca-

tion arises as clear and strong as if doubts had been solved by the judgment of a superior power—the ancients thought that this was so in the case of the answer to Aristotle and Lycurgus from Pythia.

The sudden consciousness that a person, until then ignorant of himself, acquires about his vocation is accompanied by such a deep violent shock in the roots of his moral being, in the dark limbo where the spiritual and the physical intermingle, that the emotion resembles a vertigo or a syncope. Sometimes the trace that that mysterious shock leaves on the flesh lasts like a malady of the body. Malebranche first felt his talent for metaphysics while reading Descartes' *Tract on Man*. This essay brought to his attention the image of an aptitude similar to his own which was lying undiscovered within him. His heart beat so tumultuously that he almost had to stop reading. Wagner knew nothing of his musical vocation before he heard a Beethoven symphony for the first time at a concert in Dresden. Upset by intense emotion, he returned home ill, really ill. After a few days, when he was well again, he was already fully conscious of his vocation and he prepared to follow it.

Vocation is a force that takes root in the unconscious depths of personality and prevails upon the highest, most categorical motives of the determination of the will. A dying father, a doctor disillusioned with his science, calls his son to his bedside and persuades him to swear to abandon his intention of studying medicine. For a short time the sacred oath bears some weight in his son's mind. But in the end, the supreme inner voice gains ascendancy. That blameless perjurer turns out to be Walter, the great anatomist from Koenigsberg. One who is fatally drawn to a certain kind of activity may quite reasonably condemn and scorn its objective without causing the vocation to lose a bit of its force and range.

Albinus, the great captain in the days of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, is said to have rejected arms with a thoughtful sincerity. Yet he continued to exercise them, drawn by an irresistible, natural impulse that made him say that it was for him Vergil had written the words: *Arma amens capio, nec sat rationis in armis.*

In the midst of wordly obstacles, of abandonment and adversity, of scorn and human injustice, the deeply rooted vocation grows. It develops an indomitable persistence that recalls the significant forms in which pagan fantasy expressed the tenacity of a gift or characteristic which becomes one with the essence of a being. Repetitious Echo, dead and torn to pieces, did not lose her power. Philomel's tongue, severed by her ravisher, still murmurs her complaints. Niobe, though turned to stone, still weeps. The contemplative Narcissus, even after his descent into Avernus, still seeks the beauty of his image in the black Stygian waters.

But if, once unmasked and active, a profound vocation manifests this note of fatal strength, it does not always take open possession of the soul unless the will searches for it and then animates it. Vocation is usually slow and prudish in declaring its love, even though its constancy proves later on how true this love was. That is why it often resembles the timid lover or the pauper ashamed of begging, who is torn by a struggle between his vehement desire and his weak indecision. For the comfort of the lover and the beggar who suffer this intimate conflict, Nature has distributed a fine, subtle art among her delicate gifts which usually benefit both pious individuals and those well versed in love. This is the art that provokes audacity so that the victim, unaware of the provocation, thinks the impulse is his own natural one. What perspicacity and cleverness! What an intuitive wealth of action, gesture and word! What a just mean between the op-

posite extremes of insinuation and misdirection to force the trembling lip to a bold declaration or the proud hand to the begging of alms. . . . The will needs some of this art to conquer the indecisions of certain vocations, whether it is to clarify and mark out the course of a well-known vocation or to approach us and announce a new one which we do not know yet, but which, perhaps, has had its eyes fixed upon our soul and awaits the time when the will, by changing it, through observation and trial, may by chance come upon the real vocation which its daring awakened.

§ 41. *Absence of a single vocation due to universality of aptitudes*

Vocation is the consciousness of a definite aptitude. The person who has a conscious aptitude for all kinds of activity would really have no more vocation than a person who has no aptitude for any: he would hear no particular voice calling him because he would follow any direction which chance might happen to choose or which fate might point out to him, feeling confident that no matter where it might lead he would find some way of asserting his superiority. This might seem strange and exaggerated, but it is not a human impossibility, since it has happened to some people. When Carlyle says, "I know of no really great man who could not have been whatever he wished," he makes too dogmatic a statement, for, the great man, the *hero*, the genius, presents at times a character so obstinately precise and limited that he approaches the monodeism of the obsessed. Carlyle's statement would sound more reasonable if he referred only to certain people in whom the aspiration for supreme heights was accompanied by a desire for expansion and of whom it could

be said that they attained omnipotence and omniscience as far as human limitations permit.

Since it is our purpose to discuss vocations, let us first give our attention to those highly complex figures who become rarer the nearer we get to our own age, and who are by no means suitable examples of the person who marks out the course of his activity. They do, however, comprise a definite group of spirits and are a perfect manifestation of the aggregate of forces and virtualities which may be centered in a human personality.

It is gratifying to see these complex figures (and we often see them there) upon thrones wearing the imperial purple of conquerors, being as they are the most perfect living symbols of the effective selection of their race and age. Thus, over the children of Israel rules the majestic figure of Solomon whom I like to think of as the culminating sum of his whole lineage, without taking from him even that final and transcendental trace of disillusion which completed his personality in such a profoundly interesting way and which is manifested in his book, so debated by our modern exegesis. In that wise man who pries into the secrets of Nature and knows about the birds, the wild beasts, the fish and the plants, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that creeps up the wall, who answers the difficult questions of the Queen of Sheba and teaches the ignorant and simple-minded in the book of *Proverbs*; in that philosopher who gives an universal significance to his disillusion and boredom, anticipating the penetrating tone of Kempis and the implacable dialectics of Schopenhauer; in that judge who possesses the divine wisdom to distinguish good from evil and to unravel involved disputes; in that monarch who, while the sage within him harvests the crops of theoretical knowledge, cultivates the wealth



and greatness of his kingdom with supreme energy for action, extending it from the Euphrates to Egypt, subjugating nations, building cities, equipping armies and navies, constructing ports and keeping a sweet peace so that all men might enjoy abundance and quietude "under the shade of his vineyards or under the shade of his fig-trees"; in that son of David who inherits the gift of poetry to pour it into the most passionate, sensuous and admirable song of love that the world has ever heard, and who, having been bequeathed the idea of the Temple, makes it concrete with the trees from the forests of Lebanon, with stone, with bronze and with gold; in that sybarite who accumulates wealth and dwells in a house redolent with cedar, amid the melodies of singers and musicians, surrounded by gardens of exotic plants; who says about himself, "Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy";—in this Solomon we find a typical example of a well-rounded and perfect life. Indeed in the light of our modern interpretation of things of the spirit we should add to him one thing more, the complement, which the Bible considers a weakness of religious *dilettantism*, that polytheist ambition which moves him in his last years, near the very Temple which he himself had built to the god of Israel, to raise altars to strange divinities, from the goddess Ashtoreth, an idol of the Zidonians, to Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and to Molech, the abomination of the Ammonites. In his reverence or in his anguish over the mysterious, he confused the images of hostile gods, just as before in the eagerness of his human love he had embraced the daughter of Pharaoh and the women of the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edmonites, the Zidoneans and the Hittites. Solomon is the *man* with all the fullness of bodily and mental powers with which one can extract from life its virtuality and interest; the man who at once studies, prays, sings, rules,

philosophizes, loves and enjoys life, and who as the culmination of these rich experiences lets a final drop of bitterness fall from his thought, to roll down the cheek of the centuries, into the heart of Rance, into the soul of Charles V, into the cup of Faust . . .

And now, no longer half-hidden by legendary shadows, like the biblical king, but rather in the bright sun of History, another monarch of orbicular genius appears, as the ruler of nations in the last days of paganism. It is Julian, more commonly known by the stigma which the vindictiveness of his vengeful conquerors attached to his name than by the stupendous complexity of his genius which now shows him as a saint or a poet, now as a philosopher or a hero. This gigantic soul embraces no less than four superior men, just as the crater of Pichincha has several mountains inside of it. The renewer of a dead philosophy, he infuses it with the spirit of religion for his thoughtful forehead wears a priest's head-gear. As the holder of a scepter, he ennobles it, like Trajan, with grandeur, and like Antonius, with kindness. As the brandisher of a sword, he makes the barbarians respect it and his legions admire it. He carries it from Cæsar's Gaul to Alexander's Persia, and more fortunate than either Alexander or Cæsar, he perishes while wielding it. A master of a style, he can command the severity of Marcus Aurelius, the gracefulness of Plato, the passion of Plotinus and the wit of Lucian. A whole civilization fuses in him, only to die—they die together. Wounded by a sublime blow, the ancient world collapses into the depths of nothingness. This rebellious Titan receives it with open arms, holds it on high for a moment, until, overcome by its weight, he drops it, and hurls himself after it—and his huge shadow is the wake of that disorbited world in the memory of time.

Passing over this twilight and its night to the dawn of a

new day in the human spirit, we find in Castile another royal crown upon the brow of one capable of an infinite variety of ideas: that of the wise king of the *Partidas*. If not as great or if not as successful in the art of action as in that of thought, he is equally interested in and as highly inspired by both. So broad and comprehensive is the extent of his knowledge of the arts that all the knowledge of his time is measured by the compass of his activities. Don Alfonso is a formidable head from which springs a fully armed Minerva of the civilization which is being formed and stabilized. He takes a stuttering tongue, and setting it upon his knees, he teaches it to put words together, to pronounce them, and to differentiate them and, without taking from it any of its grace and candor, he adds to its precision and vigor. He delves into the confusion of statutes and rules in which are mingled the struggling traces of successive régimes and customs and from this chaos he brings to light the most prodigious code of laws that the world has known since the days of Justinian. He wants to recount the past and, finding the limits of chronicles too narrow, he goes back as far as the memory of man will allow him and writes the *Grande e general Estoria*. His poetic sentiment lends fluidity and color to such a lengthy document. As the imposing basilica of stone resounded at certain hours with the voice of the organ and its deserted vaults echoed the complaints and supplications of its melody, thus the soul of Don Alfonso carries within its architectonic greatness the keys from which flow in an endless torrent the pious inspiration of the *Cantigas*, preludes of a lyrical sentiment and an inexhaustible mine of legends. But if he is again possessed with a desire for serious speculation, he is not content to retrace the path he has already trod. Since he, like the Magi, is attracted by the secrets of the stars, he builds that famous observatory, where he will

compile the *Tablas Alfonsinas*. At his insistence, the sciences of the Orient were introduced into the schools of Toledo; and the ballad, ennobled by him, adapts the ideas of the Hebraic books, of the Moorish masters of Bagdad and Córdoba, and even of the story-tellers of India. This marvelous activity that develops either through his own work or by his supervision and encouragement of the work of others, is accomplished by that gigantic spirit, not in retired calm, but in the very center of perpetual political agitation and warfare. While he is trying to don the imperial purple of the German Empire, he checks the uprisings of his own rebellious nobility or he lends assistance at the frontier against the sudden attacks of the Moors.

These are kings who were really leaders of their people—not in a mere political sense, but in the broader sense of civilization. But such a supreme representative breadth, such a complexity of faculties, certainly does not need either sceptre or crown when it appears in a human being as the manifestation of Nature's own special selection. That great spiritual florescence—the Renaissance—is, perhaps, more fertile than any other epoch. In cases of such versatility, owing to certain passing circumstances, it tended to adopt as its model the multiple personality. When the energies, repressed and confined during the long sleep of centuries, are at last freed, it seems as if all the activities of the intelligence and the will are not enough to utilize all their exuberant forces, as if each man needs many more varied means for satisfying his desires to enjoy life. If one searches that mighty epoch of History for heroes of thought alone, or for heroes of action alone, he is almost sure to find heroes combining both: head of eagle, body of lion, like the griffin. Neither philosophizing nor creating art nor searching for pure ideas with the most fervent passion that has ever taken fire in the human heart

since the time of Athens and Alexandria ever prevented those men from being embroiled in the warlike unrest of their time, nor from winning glory with the sword, nor from testing the blade of their knowledge in that other sphere of political machinations which was then at the root of their kingdom, by making gentle the clutch of brutal force by means of refined arts which *The Prince* expresses in a cynical and elegant manner.

Thus there stands out against the triumphal background of the marvellous XVIth century spirits like Cornelius Agrippa whom Emperor Maximilian carried along in his train as a warrior and as a secretary. He is an extraordinary combination of the sceptic and the enlightened man, of the fantastic occultist and the critical demolisher, theologian, doctor, lawyer, mining engineer, master of all sciences in Dole and Cologne, Turin and Pavia, an adviser over whom kings fought as if he were a precious talisman or an interesting curio, as apt for heroism which gained him the title of knight on the field of battle as for attending the Emperor's councils, governing cities or participating in schismatic conventicles.

The nature of that glorious century is shown also by the more statuary and classic figure of Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the most significant and rounded man of the Spanish Renaissance. Here we have a head for beauty of style and for political schemes, an arm for hard blows, a hunter's eye—the incomparable, the magnificent Don Diego, soldier, ambassador, Governor of Sienna, arbitrator of Italy, mouth-piece of Charles V, whose words resounded in the Council of Trent louder than the Pope's, whose will caught princes and republics in subtle nets. From a literary view-point: a humanist from the start, he is thrilled to the marrow of his bones in his enthusiasm for the revival of beauty and for

the recovery of precious manuscripts—to him the Sultan of Turkey once presented six chests of old manuscripts as a reward from the state; a poet, he writes as well in the popular manner as in the hendecasyllable of Garcilaso; as a prose writer, he produces the nuances of Sallust's style in a picturesque history and enriches Spanish prose with the exquisite gem, *El Lazarillo de Tormes*.

If we put aside politics and war and stress rather the faculties of pure thought in its two aspects—art and science—we should find the renewed vigor of the Renaissance infused in the supreme personification of Leonardo da Vinci. Never did so beautiful a figure have for its pedestal an epoch so worthy of sustaining it. Nature and art are the limits which bound the work of that great human epoch: a nature completely restored in man's love, attention and interest; an art regenerated by beauty and truth. Both fields of endeavor owe much to that supreme spirit. Modern science begins with Leonardo's manuscripts. Face to face with the secrets of the material world, he regains and puts to worthy use the organ of *experience*—the huge tentacle which will tremble over the head of wisdom, and supplant the sovereignty of authority and tradition. Galileo, Newton and Descartes are in potential embryo in the mind of Leonardo. For him knowledge has no artificial limits because his intuition with its eagle's eyes embraces the whole spectacle of the world in all its breadth and profundity. His genius as an experimenter does not prevent him from raising mathematical speculation to lofty heights. Thus he harmonizes both these methods which centuries to come will use to carry forward their conquest of Nature. Just as on Athena's helmet in the Parthenon there are four horses abreast pulling in double file to symbolize the speed with which her divine mind works, so in the mind of

Leonardo all the branches of learning rush about at a great pace, each contending for supremacy in discovery and fame. There has been no one since Archimedes who has displayed a greater faculty for abstraction in the science of calculus, nor more inventive power in its application, nor has there been anyone before Galileo who applied to the silence of things "iron and fire" (to use Bacon's metaphor) with more resolute boldness. A knowledge of the laws of motion, the observation of heavenly bodies and the secrets of the water and the air, a conception of human anatomy, notions of geology, and an intimacy with plants—all was given to him. He is the Adam of a new world where the tempting serpent has aroused a desire for infinite wisdom. Having communicated to the revelations of science the essentially modern conception of practicality and utility, he does not stop with pure theory but he seeks the way to consecrate each discovered truth so as to increase the power and happiness of man. Like a young Cyclops intoxicated with youth and possessed with that passion for work characteristic of his race, he wanders over Italy as if it were his cave, turning a hundred different schemes over in his mind: some of them are carried out, some merely suggested and sketched, most of them are realizable and precious—systems of canals, a way to bore mountains, inexpugnable fortifications, marvellous engines of war, derricks and capstans for removing very heavy weights. Amid all these cyclopean projects, he still has time and strength to give bent to his joviality in a thousand ingenious schemes. Just as Apollo Sminthos was not loath to hunt the rats of the country-side with the famous bow that caused the death of Python, so Leonardo used his leisure time and strength to invent mechanical toys, tricks and birds that could fly or that symbolical lion that he constructed to greet the king of France as he entered Milan, and which stopped after a few steps and laid bare its breast

and showed it covered with lilies. . . . Never has a cry of pride issued from human lips better warranted by accomplishment than that with which the remarkable Florentine offered the treasures of his genius to the Duke of Milan, "*I am capable of anything that may be expected of a mortal being.*" But if Leonardo's science is prodigious and if his mastery is the complement of his science and if he was a magic gift to his age—how can one describe his genius in pure art, in the art of beauty? . . . If one should offer the sceptre of painting to Leonardo, there would be someone who could present rivals, but never any superiors. He is possessed with a prophetic sense of expression at a time when the plastic was the triumph to which an art, carried away by its love for the strength and harmony of the body, aspired almost exclusively—Leonardo does not paint forms only, he paints the smile and glance of Mona Lisa, the varied facial expressions of the guests at the Last Supper, he paints features, he paints souls. And no matter how great the beauty of his canvases may be, his artistic genius can still compete for other laurels—the chisel of Michelangelo fits into his hand and when he is moved to perpetuate a heroic figure he does not stop until it has attained gigantic proportions. The gift of architectonic eurythmy inspired him: he invents a thousand plans, Cesar Borgia entrusts to him the building of his forts and palaces. He can weave the ærial veils of music, and lest his creative genius abandon him in this, he contrives a new stringed instrument, engraving it in silver and giving it the form of a horse's skull—then he sings to its accompaniment at the court of Luigi Sforza. When you add to all this the beauty of Absalom, the strength of a bull, the skill of Perseus, a soul as generous as that of a primitive man, as refined as that of a nobleman, you will have the most complete and perfect example of human greatness ever produced by Nature and at



his feet you will write, without fear of any exaggeration:  
THIS MAN WAS LEONARDO DA VINCI.

—And if it were proven that Bacon and Shakespeare were the very same person?

—If it were proven that Bacon and Shakespeare were the very same person Atlas' shoulders could never have supported such a universe . . . ; but where do you rest, Leonardo of the lily breast, like that of your lion? . . . From those dizzy heights one could have seen—alas, pitiful sight!—the fifth *bolgia* of Malebolge which holds for an eternity those judges who sold justice and where Giampolo, the prevaricating minister of good king Theobald, burns, steeped in boiling pitch.

When the universality of aptitudes is considered only in relation to knowledge or wisdom, measured by the standards of a single civilization or century, the result is a type of omniscience which ancient times called the *sage*. The name will never appear again with similar significance, at least as far as we can tell by looking into the future. The supreme and eternal type of this kind of spirit is Aristotle—that immense shadow which arises upon the horizon of antiquity at a time when Hellenic culture is at the height of its perfection. He collects, unifies, and stamps as his own all the thoughts, all the knowledge of those about him, adding new ideas and information on subjects ranging all the way from the organization of States to the respiratory system, from the methods of logic to phenomena of the air. It was not enough for him to teach the most noble race of the world; the authority of his learning has outlived gods who have grown old and empires which have crumbled. His austere and bare work is like a skeleton of ideas upon which three different civilizations were to support the muscles of their thought: one which ended with Hypathia's last words, another which spread with Islam, and finally one which develops, in light and in dark-

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ness, from the time of the first monastic cloisters to the first universities of the humanists. Minds of such transcendency construct the moulds of thought for all the ages, they are the patrimony of no special one. It is said that if the deep sea were to become dry, it would take forty centuries for the rivers that empty into it to fill it again. Thus I represent the proportion between the creative capacity of one of these complex intellectual beings and the persevering, yet insignificant, labor of the succeeding generations.

Before the total eclipse of the intellect takes place the Aristotelian universality, infused with a new and sublime inspiration, is partially reproduced in another remarkable spirit. Augustine, reasoner of a faith, diffuses the capacity of his wisdom and genius through the twelve thousand stadiums of the *City of God*. Later, in the slow dawning of the human reason, this universality, although deteriorated by the lack of a personal touch and a loftiness of thought, is a characteristic that issues from the lack of organization in the awakening culture. Thus, the defenders and restorers of wisdom are made universal by the very nature of the work entrusted to them. They are by name: the Cassiodoruses, the Isidores, the Alcuins, and the Bedes, diligent Plinies and Varros of an age which must begin by collecting buried ideas scattered among the debris of ruins. But it is in full light of the XIIIth century that the creative genius of a civilization boldly asserts itself before passing its sceptre to the more advanced, succeeding civilization. It is then that several splendid personifications of encyclical learning appear; they evoke, in a way, the august memory of that educator of mankind—the Stagirate. Later there appear the men who set in order the treasure so painfully restored, the artificers of *summæ*: Thomas Aquinas, for instance, who harmonizes the thought of the ancients with his theology; or Roger Bacon who acquires a new kind

of wisdom from direct and experimental observation; or Albertus Magnus who includes in the scope of his work the sublime and the trivial, ontological speculation and experimental science.

In the legion of omniscient minds produced by that century I perceive in the distance two men whose complexity exceeds the limits of pure wisdom and expands into a still larger circle of activities and aptitudes. One represents glorious inspiration in action; the other, supreme greatness in Art; without Art being unknown to the former, nor action to the latter. I speak of Raymond Lully and Dante Alighieri. Raymond Lully, *doctor illuminatus*, after he had let loose an overwhelming torrent of ideas which swept away every object of knowledge, descends from the solitude of Mt. Randa, and appears like an apostle and hero of some sublime enterprise. Delirious with love, he runs in great haste over the world to predict a gigantic crusade, the redemption of the Orient, and after all this he receives the palms of martyrdom. Dante Alighieri won the summit from a flock of eagles; the poet knew all that was known at this time and foresaw the rest; he was a Leonardo da Vinci (in that he possessed the duality of the inventive genius) who expresses pictures and statues in the verbal imagery of verse, and discoveries and prophecies in the throes of a pythonic convulsion. He might also be called a credible phantom, a Bacon-Shakespeare, prepared by the harmony and completeness of the age in which he was born to manifest his twofold power, not in separate forms, but in the single and stupenduous organism of a poem where he could revive that total synthesis which was the gift of great epic poems.

After learning is established in an organized and methodical way, freed and distributed in different categories, the universality of a profound and productive knowledge still glows

like an aureola over the heads of a few rare spirits. The two first centuries of the modern age had already raised scientific investigation to a very high degree of complexity when Leibnitz appeared and glanced with his hundred-eyes-of-Argos over Nature and men. Wherever his glance fell, whether upon physical sciences, mathematical sciences, philology, jurisprudence or metaphysics, he always revealed a hidden treasure and retained the pristine quality of his genius. Even nearer to us than Leibnitz, Diderot appears, less creative and inventive than he in the realm of science, but, on the other hand, a seeker of knowledge of truth and beauty, of Science and Art. He passed from mere speculation into action, his words became engines of war and Diderot stands out as the leader of a critical and demolishing century, the prophet of the Revolution, Aristotle clad in armor and helmet, the compiler of the Encyclopedia.

Besides the spirits who are endowed with wisdom, art and action; besides those who possess two of these three kinds of heroism; besides those who are thoroughly acquainted with the peculiarities and applications of at least one of three; there are still other spirits who have understood, within the realms of Art or Science, a whole harmonious group of disciplines which are similar in their aim and requirements. Among these are men who cultivated successfully all the literary genres, like Manzoni, Voltaire and Lope de Vega; the plastic arts, like Puget, Bernini, Albrecht Dürer and Alonso Cano; all the natural sciences, like Linnæus, Humboldt and Lamarck.

§ 42. *As society advances, vocation tends toward more definite and more concrete forms*

The absence of a definite vocation because of a universal diffusion of aptitude becomes a less frequent condition in

human society as time goes on. As society advances and multiplies and broadens its activity as a growing tree sprouts branches and twigs, it is quite natural for individual vocation to take a more limited and concrete form. Personal vocations are born when primitive man ceases to be sufficient unto himself and begins to be useful and necessary to his fellow men. The muscles of that Adam condemned to *work* in a rudimentary and indeterminate way become loosened and they are called Jabal, the shepherd, Tubalcain, the forger of metal, and Nimrod, the hunter of wild beasts. . . . And the instinct for each vocation is fixed when that which was at first an aptitude acquired through necessity and ingrained by custom first changes into the instinctive preference of him who acquired it, and then transmits itself to other human beings. It may be through teaching and sympathy or it may later become the accumulation in an innate and gracious gift of all the acts of our ancestors.

The most diverse dispositions and aptitudes by which the sons of each generation of civilized society are differentiated are only the thousand echoes through the caves of time of the four or five cardinal *calls* that primitive men answered when they went to their different daily labors. Some learned the use of arms; some payed tribute to the gods. Others extracted balsam and poisons from herbs; others drew music from a reed; still others broke up the rocks and cleared away the virgin forests. As the necessities of each generation increase, the kinds of aptitude increase also; and with the kinds of aptitude which mould and characterize the genius of a race, comes the tendency to change each new variety that natural progress determines in the development of human aptitudes into an innate and instinctive predisposition, into true *vocation*.

An infallible economy provides each society and genera-

tion with the workers which the industry needs. With the workers comes an adequate number of natural *bosses*. As long as a certain kind of activity lasts in the life of a social group, the spirits capable of directing that activity to its goal arise with admirable punctuality and efficacy. One might say that in the womb of the multitude there appears the desired and imagined form of the superior souls who are necessary to guide them, just as the anticipated form of the child takes its mould in the mother's womb—thus the real appearance coincides with the image of the dream. A society of heroic souls is not long without a great hero. The Messiah came to the world when everybody was thinking about him and needed him. In regard to superior men every human society has at its disposal the credit, no matter how trivial, justly proportioned to its aspirations and merits. As she has deeds to accomplish and grievances to make right, she will create strong leaders to guide her. According as she enjoys the "understanding of beauty," she inspires artists to praise it. According as she is capable of belief and zeal, she evokes prophets, martyrs and apostles from ever-vigilant reserves.

#### § 43. *The future. Hope in living forms*

The future, whose dawn we shall see come from our own dusk, as well as our present, will possess the splendor of thoughtful souls, the fragrance of souls capable of creating beauty and the magnetism of souls destined for authority, apostleship and action. From the new, obscure multitudes the inevitable chosen ones will bring to the world new truth and beauty, new heroism and new faith. What an irresistible, melancholy longing seizes our hearts when we realize that this ideal outburst will not be ours! But hope has, in the reality that surrounds us, forms more living, surer determinations

than the ghosts of our imaginations. When we turn our eyes to that living reality of hope, melancholy desire loses all bitterness and becomes still softer than the caress of an egoistic dream. . . . Besides the Humanity that struggles, makes vain efforts, has known pain, has prostituted its thought and will and perhaps looks at tomorrow with the melancholy thought of darkness at the end and final deception, there is another Humanity, gracious and sweet, that knows nothing of all this, whose soul is woven of hope, joy and love. There is a Humanity that still lives in the peace of Eden, without the presentiment of a temptation and a fall—closed to Hatred, inaccessible to Disillusion. . . . At our side and at the same time *far* from us, children laugh and play only half submerged in reality; light souls suspended by a thread of light in a world of illusion and dreams. The future sleeps in their serene foreheads, in their pure hearts and weak arms. That unknown future that will become reality after some time . . . overshadowing faces, tearing those arms and sorely crushing hearts. Life will have to sacrifice so much happiness and candor to the altars of the future. The future will transform into utility and strength the beauty of those frail beings whose only noble utility at present is to keep alive within us the most beneficent fountains of sentiment, obliging us to be continually benevolent through the contemplation of their weakness.

All the energies of the future will come from just such a valuable weakness. In these transitory incarnations there are some who will raise and wave unknown banners in the light of dawns that we shall never see. Some will solve doubts that have tortured our thought in vain, others are to witness the ruin of many things we consider sure and immutable, some are to rectify mistakes that we believe in and destroy the wrongs that we allow to remain, some will condemn or ac-

quit us, some are to pass definite judgment on our work and to decide whether our name shall be forgotten or consecrated, some will perhaps see the things we thought mere dreams and will pity us for what we considered marvels. . . .

A thought thus illumined, but otherwise spiritless because of its vacillation and vagueness, that thought of a future we shall never see, acquires the form and warmth of a living thing. It takes on shapes and colors that arouse our emotions; it binds us with the cry of its heart. It is the kingdom of the Dauphin of present Humanity. It is the kingdom of an old king, already oppressed by the weight of the robe of state, which he takes pleasure in imagining as the glorious result of his battles, under the fruitful leadership of an eternally proud, young figure.

But if the mysterious future lives and progresses in a Humanity full of content and love, where are those who must point out the course to the rest of Humanity and personify them in glory? Who are the ones that will carry the fibre of virile courage in their arms and a spark of the sacred fire deep in their eyes? Where are the cubs of the lion-Heroe? Where are the young of the eagle of genius? Where are they so that we may bear them high over our heads and unanimously glorify the selection of the gods before the appearance of contradiction, jealousy and envy?

#### § 44. *Prophecies. The sublime children pass by . . .*

The masses and the chosen few of the future are completely merged in those vapid multitudes where the most sacred equality rules. It is the equality of common hope. Upon these foreheads which time raises one inch higher from the ground every year; upon these foreheads, even the most forsaken, and wretched, rests the hope that sustains the faith of love. The



legends that adorn the cradles of the great with significant prophecies are reproduced in the visionary faith of purest love for everyone in the world. We can not cast a glance at any tender lips without recalling that dream of how the bees sipped from the infant mouths of Hesiod and of Plato, of Saint Ambrose and of Lucan, or how the busy ants piled up grains of wheat on Midas' lips—an omen that he would be lord of Phrygia.

But besides what this glance of love depicts, without any reason but love itself, it also imprints its prophetic benediction. For the common glance among those gracious faces, there are also those who seem to bear the stamp of a glorious predestination. In the presence of the child, who has not been inclined to predict with a sudden inspiration the future genius? It is said that, when Erasmus was a child, Agricola of Holland once saw him and, noticing his radiant forehead and the eloquence of his eyes, he said to him: *Tu eris magnus!* In the presence of certain curious poems, certain originalities of thought, certain surprising intuitions, a certain continuous restlessness and certain mysterious retirements, who is not moved to ask along with Victor Hugo's *Tentanda via est*: "What is germinating for Humanity behind that limpid forehead? Perhaps it is the whole world of Columbus, Herschel's new star, the harmonious marble of Michelangelo or the transfigured map of Napoleon? . . ."

For the subtle, careful observer, the noisy crowd is full of revelations that allow one to get a glimpse of the secret of the future loves of Glory. That boy *with the bright eyes* who, in a city full of students, stoops over in the street to pick up printed papers and guards them jealously—is Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. There is another child improvising verses in the patio of an elementary school and, still too young to write them down himself, he dictates them to older compan-

ions whom he pays for their trouble with pictures and cakes—he is Lope Felix de Vega Carpio. Yonder, in the valley of Chiana, in the marble quarries that give flesh to the gods, a six-year-old child spends long hours absorbed in contemplation of the hard white stone. That child will master the marble—his name is Buonarroti. Another boy wanders through the Seville of the Golden Age drawing rough pictures on the walls of houses with a piece of charcoal. This piece of charcoal is the herald of a glorious brush—the brush of Murillo. Further off at the foot of a mountain of Auvergne there is a shepherds' hut. Stretched out on the grass, a young shepherd is busy moulding figures in relief out of mud—he is Foyatier. Some day he will revive in marble the soul of Spartacus breaking the bonds of slavery. Who is the little African who imitates the baptismal ceremony in the sight of the patriarch Alexander who smiles with prophetic tears? He is Athanasius, for whom is reserved the glory of confusing the Arians. That is his favorite play just as building altars is Carlos Borromeo's. Now there comes to my imagination a house of Halle near a river of Saxony. It is night. A child climbs secretly up to the garret where a clavicord is hidden. He spends the hours stolen from sleep in imitating the movements of the musician,—this furtive artist is Haendel. Still younger, because he is less than three years old, in a poor house in Brunswick, lived a precocious accountant who marked lines and figures upon the floor with a pencil—his name is Gauss. His head holds in store calculations that La Place will consider greater than his own. Then I turn my glance upon school-boys in Normandy constructing toy cannons with willow bark. One of them teaches the others how to regulate the length and diameter of the arm to assure a successful shot. This young master is Fresnel who later will become master among men in the theory and application of

the forces of the physical world. Let us crown these examples with the *truth* of legendary tradition where the juice of deeds is distilled and concentrated. At the door of a Persian herdsman's cottage the neighboring children are playing the game of *basilinda*—a king is chosen; he, in turn, selects princes and dignitaries. There is one child who never agrees, when he is present, with their election because he always wants the royal authority for himself; the others do not dispute his power. The name of this lover of sovereignty is Cyrus and one day the Orient, from the Ægean Sea to the Indian Ocean, will fall at his feet.

§ 45. *False prophecies. Prophetic childhoods*

Although a mysterious hint may come with the dawning of reason, even with the first unconscious movements of the mind, one can not be always sure that the vocation will persist and become established in the future. As new elements, capable of changing the original course of Nature, become incorporated in the personality, so much easier is it for the revealing voice to be drowned out. The disorientated person who is not conscious of his vocation, who does not find in himself a guiding impulse or aptitude that stands out from all the rest, can often find a means of recovering the certain course that was lost early in life by an appeal to his memory of his early views of life, of his precocious tendencies toward certain ways of thinking and acting or his first fancies about his own future.

A strong liking and the precocious aptitude that justifies it usually pass away and disappear in infancy, not because of external obstacles, but through a spontaneous deflection of feeling and will. There are lives prefaced by a sublime infancy that can be compared to the green algæ that float and dance

on the surface of the water as if endowed with life and movement until they attach themselves to a stone on the shore and remain there forever motionless in vegetative sopor. . . . Perhaps the youthful vocation was illusory; perhaps that appearance of the aptitude was nothing but a clever, vain imitation, a form selected haphazardly in the exuberance of a disordered vivacity; perhaps at other times the spring that really began to flow becomes mysteriously dry in the hands of Nature; the stream is not deflected or hidden, but has been stopped from the beginning. Furthermore, perhaps it is only the consciousness of the aptitude that lies dormant, misdirecting the vocation. By virtue of happy circumstances, the aptitude persists in the depths of the soul, ready to be called forth as long as life lasts. This is the reason why I call such childhoods *prophetic*. I do not consider prophetic those childhoods which are illumined by the dawn of a superiority that continues afterwards without any eclipse and grows as the personality forms and develops. But I do consider prophetic those childhoods which reveal through indications, later considered fallacious, the presence of a superior aptitude that is first in-rooted in childhood and reappears much later after the personality has been tried in wordly conflicts and enriched by experience—sometimes it appears in maturity or even when life is nearing its dusk. (It is the ship that returns. Glory and good fortune to the ship!)

To effect such a reawakening in a vacillating mind the evocation of the dreams and hopes of childhood are very valuable. They bring fertile suggestions that burst forth from the melancholy remembrance of things past. Just as a shipwrecked man contemplating the golden clouds of twilight in his gloomy idleness on a deserted beach may perchance discover the rescuing ship. . . .

A childish fondness for inventing and telling stories has

reappeared, after a rather inconspicuous youth, in two glorious cases as the creative faculty of the novelist. Richardson, whose childhood was thus characterized, produced his first work after he was fifty years old. Walter Scott, also a great story-teller in his childhood, passes from this prophetic childhood to a drab, colorless adolescence. Not until manhood did he cut that wonderful quill that conjured up such picturesque traditions and delightful history. Not long ago Tattengrain was telling a group of artists about his early life. When he was a child he showed a strong passion for drawing; this inclination soon disappeared. In the passing from youth to maturity, he picked up the pencil of his childish efforts and with a masterly daring he displayed his personality as an artist.

It is not only in the sense of anticipating a vocation that childhood is often prophetic. The real, stable depth of a character, the fundamental orientation of sentiments and ideas that have been roughly outlined in childhood reappear on certain occasions, after they have been repressed for a long period of time by a false personal superficiality, a product of the artificial suggestion of environment (you will recall the deceiving tablet of Sostratus). For this reason it is not unusual that the style, the peculiar manner, that is to definitely dominate the work of a writer or an artist is more related to the impressions that moulded him in his early years rather than to the trend of his adolescent efforts, often guided by external influences and often flattered by their first sally into the world. There are some people who have considered genius the childish expression of an unusual personality already gifted with a powerful means of asserting itself and manifesting its superiority. . . . In his childhood Brentano was inclined towards mysticism. Later when he returned to reason, he becomes a sceptic writer of no great merit. His literary personality is affirmed and enlarged, like a river whose dams

have been broken, when Brentano, inflamed by the piety that characterized German romanticism, recovers the tenor of his childhood soul.

§ 46. *The static permanence of a seed capable of germinating*

So, even when childhood does not openly manifest the promise of a future aptitude, it does unite and incorporate in the personality impressions that perhaps later on will be the fuel or rough material of the aptitude. How often have we observed how the great interpreters of Nature's soul have spent their childhoods caressed by the gentle country breezes!

Such was the case with La Fontaine who was slow to give voice to the impressions of a childhood which was spent in pastoral solitude during an age when no one loved it.

This prediction of aptitude would be evident to any keen observer who could successfully interpret and give due emphasis to each subtle indication, to each hazy trace of the seemingly trivial and nonsensical velleity, to each revealing flash of a moment. But a latent aptitude often envelops itself in a mystery that can not be made apparent to the sight of others by the transparency of childhood, nor can the possessor of the aptitude, when he becomes conscious of it, relate it with the memories and the desires of his early years. The aptitude is not usually realized until the end of life is near. Environment alone can not arouse a manifestation of an aptitude because environment alone can never restrain it. This can not be done even when the environment is propitious or even when the aptitude has in its favor, long before the occasion on which it becomes aware of itself, the facilities of education and the stimulation of example. It is similar to what in vegetable life is called the *sleep of grains*—it is the static permanence of a grain capable of germinating. For an

indefinite time the grain is only a small, dry body upon the earth's surface. But it does not cease to bear its pertinacious power for germination, the virtue of being able to produce a perfect fruitful plant, when the Earth takes it lovingly to her bosom. The stir, the movement of life can not create an aptitude that has not come from Nature's spontaneity, but it is infinitely capable of discovering and revealing those that are hidden.

It may be because of this *sleep* of the virtual aptitude or because of the superficial observation of those who watch them, that the childhood and adolescence of great men leave no memory of any kind of superiority that distinguishes them from the masses. "Your childhood was not beautiful," says the author of *Faust*, "the flowers of the vine have no shape or color, but when the clusters ripen they are the joy of gods and men."

In antiquity this could be applied to Themistocles and Cimon whose childhoods were so utterly different from the temper of their souls, which was to bring glory to them. School reputations usually are poor indications of the future—as much for what they deny as for what they assert. Rumor has it that St. Thomas and Domenichino were nicknamed in their childhood with the name of that dull, phlegmatic animal that laboriously digs furrows. *Il Bue muto di Sicilia, il Bue . . .* And as time went on, what *mooings* were heard in the *Summa*! What sure *thrusts* are those of the brush of the *Last Communion of St. Jerome*! . . . George Sand also *ruminated* in silence. "Don't think that she is an imbecile," her mother used to say quickly to visitors, "she is *ruminating*. . . ." When the teacher of young Pestalozzi discovered the shortcomings of his teaching methods as far as his pupil was concerned, he never suspected that the poor student was to invent new and better ones.

The aptitude is preceded at times not only by a deceiving dullness but even by an open aversion for the kind of activity in which the vocation will later find its field of action. Who would imagine that Beethoven abhorred music in his childhood? Who would suspect that Frederick the Great detested the noise of arms when his father was preparing the armies of Friedberg and Lissa for him?

But besides these negative fallacious presages of childhood, even in a promising one or one which conceals its secret in vagueness and uncertainty, the aptitude usually lies hidden for a long time before it acquires a clear consciousness and a resolute will from which the first work is born. Accordingly, the period of *sleep* of the precious seed did not end for Vergil until the last of his adolescent years; for Rousseau and Flaubert in their youth; for the humorist Sterne and for Andrea Doria, the famous mariner, in the first half of middle age. Similar cases of belated beginnings may be found in every type of life, active or contemplative; although we do not mean to include those which seem to delay in awaking the aptitude that has always been capable of bearing fruit and aware of itself, and in determining a real and definite vocation. Not until much later do others learn of it, because of the absence of the means with which to cultivate the vocation or of an inducement that might engender the desire to make use of it.

#### § 47. *Paternal authority. The oblates*

On the other hand, the true impulse of a vocation after early manifestations often yields to opposing forces. However prophetic and revealing the spontaneity of childhood may be to the close observer and however marvellous is the loving intention to see into the depths of the soul, it is not



unusual for the over-zealous will of parents to cause deviations, failures and vain imitations of a vocation.

In the majority of cases this opposing influence is not founded on an ignorance of the child's natural predilection, for it appears in too obvious and candid a way to remain unnoticed. But this influence is founded on the false persuasion that can offer a more advantageous substitute for Nature's voice—a substitute arbitrarily selected and uncertain of finding an answering echo in the internal abyss. The solicitude of paternal affection that foresees dangers and suffering in the path toward which a precocious desire is bent, the flattery of the promises and the advantages of another; perhaps the pride in the true and desired vocation that engenders an ambition to perpetuate its name; perhaps a melancholy affection for a former vocation cut short by fate; or the desire to see it rise and triumph in a soul which came from their own—all these are reasons why the will of parents frequently manifests itself, not to encourage the spontaneous orientation of the child's soul, but to orient it without permitting free choice, or to divert it from the course to which a mysterious voice summons it.

The piety of former times used to render to the Church, the living tribute of *oblates*, who were consecrated to the priesthood without having any preference in the matter. All the professions have their *oblates*; this would be even more true if paternal "predestination" possessed the irrevocability of ecclesiastical consecration.

It is easy to find in the childhoods of great men this early proof of the world's misunderstanding and opposition. If Haendel and Berlioz were to choose between filial obedience and their love for music, if Benvenuto Cellini and Guido Reni had been destined by their parents for a musical career, only the rebellion of instinct would have guided them to their

own field of glory. The same domestic authority that promised Hernan Cortes to literature consecrated Filangieri to armies.

Less frequently, but not impossibly, just the opposite happens. The will of a parent, guided by an unfailing observation, sets a person against his own will upon the road of his true aptitude, killing the germ of a false or doubtful vocation. Donizetti, an example of this, had illusive childish dreams not of the most spiritual art, but of the most material: architecture. When early education works with this dexterity, its efficacy is powerful, almost as powerful as the very gift of Nature. Who can estimate the influence that discipline can have upon the natural disposition of a person in his formation and guidance from his tender, plastic childhood? Mengs' father directed the infancy of the future painter to the superior aim of that vocation by painstakingly superintending both his study and his play—he tended his son's vocation as carefully as a rare and precious seed.

We know of the unpardonable mistakes of paternal opposition through the stories of those who have overcome it and been successful in their plans. But in the *middle state* of all activity and application, in the herd of souls who fulfill their work in the world with no love for it or glory from it, how many are there whose original aptitude must have been sacrificed in childhood to an artificial aptitude! How many there are whose original aptitude received no encouragement or found no means of resistance and remained stifled under a parasitic vocation that condemned it to an irredeemable mediocrity!

§ 48. *A vocation which anticipates the aptitude*

It usually happens that a prematurely realized vocation to which the soul, then at the age of realizing its expectations,

remains faithful without any instance of doubt or distrust, does not, however, correspond to any indication of ability, and may for a long time seem vain and false. But an unconquerable ardor of the will sustains it, and one day, when the adverse omen is unanimous, the aptitude gives an account of itself; that perseverance vindicates itself and shows how noble it was.

Such a vocation is not an attestation of a real and effective power, but a presentiment of a faculty which has appeared too late to occupy the seat of honor which the constant will keeps and preserves for it. It is like the anticipated aroma of a distant forest, like a glimpse that scrutinizes the soul with a prying gaze by which it ascertains the existence of a light which, as yet, no one has perceived but which will soon appear in its full splendor. Through a mysterious intuition, the soul *knows* that it is called to that particular activity and that kind of fame; it does not find in itself powers that show, or that even promise, the reality of its vision; it persists in it, it insists, it hopes without a sensible reason for hope, and afterwards time changes the illusion of the mirage to reality. When that kind of obstinacy appears, it is often confused with the foolish stubbornness by which false vocations are usually accompanied. Only time can decide whether the stubbornness corresponds to a vain illusion or an inspired anticipation of the vocation. They are confused in such a way, while time is deciding, that it could be said, as the poet said of Columbus and the world of his dreams, that in certain souls there never is any hint of the gifts that will manifest themselves triumphantly, but that fate grants them to them, through a creative act, as a reward for their faith. To posterity that views the complete life of those who long to last in its memory, the perseverance of one who missed the right road and took another, only to fail because it was not destined for him,

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will be only a fleeting object of compassion (or of sorrowful respect, when heroic); but the beginnings of helpless faith, whose irrevocable confidence is not confirmed in the real promise, in the objective demonstration of the aptitude, will be a lofty preface to a life in which glory will have a difficult and loving harvest. Because I do not speak now of perseverance maintained in spite of the unjust contempt with which the opinion of the world fails to recognize merits that already exist in the scorned one, but of that perseverance which apparently promises nothing to an impartial judge. But with an intimate knowledge of his hidden treasure, he persists against his own judgment and soon conquers in favor of justice. He errs, perhaps, with regard to an illusory estimation of merits which he does not yet have, but guesses correctly the prophetic vista of merits that he will acquire. The name that first comes to my mind as an example of this is that of Luigi Carracci, that noble, sincere and conscientious painter, who, with Agostino and Anibale, who were also painters, revived the Bolognese School at the twilight of the Renaissance. It is related that when Luigi began to paint, he gave such a poor indication of his ability, that Fontana, who had initiated him into the art, and Tintoretto, who saw his pictures in Venice, advised him to give up his brush forever. The faith of this poor pupil persisted, contrary to the counsel of both his masters, and this man came to be the master around whom that experiment in synthesis of the Italian School was set to work, and whose paintings, *The Transfiguration* and the *Birth of the Baptist*, the visitors at the Pinacoteca of Bologna admire to-day.

The case of Pigalle is similar; the sculptor who had to reconcile the marble made insipid by the taste of courtiers with truth and vigor, and whose unproductive and languid apprenticeship showed no other indication of talent than an

unchangeable, calm perseverance which accompanied him like a fairy visible only to him, left the studio of his master ashamed and took the road to Italy with the idea of committing himself to the hands of greater gods.

In the dramatic performer, whose particular kind of spiritual superiority requires the aid of material and external dispositions—the voice, the features and the physique—these externalities, if Nature gives them grudgingly, constitute a veil or shade in front of the intimate aptitude which conceals it from another's eyes and which must be lifted by a supreme effort of the will, red-hot in the fire of vocation. There disappear those hazy and pallid dawnings in outstanding actors, like Lekain, Máiquez, and Cubas, obliged to remodel, in a hard battle with themselves, their physical appearance, and even their very character, to open a way out in their souls for the light which is hidden there.

The heroisms of saintliness, inspired in the vehement desire for that other *glory*, that culminates in the apex of human dreams, do not have more crude energies with which to conquer Nature's rebellion, nor more subtle crafts with which to overcome the foe, than those which are employed by the persistence of an aptitude that considers itself great but misunderstood and seeks its way into the world from the shadow.

#### § 49. *An occasion pregnant with destinies*

The current of life brings about an occasion so pregnant with destinies, a movement so steady and in harmony with the springs and energies of our being that, when the soul possesses an embryonic potentiality it often becomes an act, and thenceforth the personality is firmly outlined and on the way to its sure development.

If all the tumultuous ardor of our passions is related to

a principle, they acquire rhythm and an order, all their diversity fits into one center, all their force is concentrated in a single motive. When we come to understand this motive we can understand the most secret and profound recesses of even the most dissimilar hearts and wills in the same way that, once the secret of the alphabet is known, everything written immediately declares its meaning: whether it be history or fable, libel or prayer. . . . And what can this beginning, this center, this supreme motivating force of our sensibility be but that primogenial power which seemed to be rocking the elements of the world in the darkness of chaos at the dawn of creation; which is present at the root of whatever happens as an inexhaustible impulse of desire and action; which prevails in the background of whatever is imagined as the perpetual source of interest and beauty; which, rather than the work or the instrument of God, is one with God; which, being the fountain of life, maintains even with death those mysterious sympathies that cause an immortal idea to fraternize the two? . . . What could it be but that *strong, skillful, ancient and most famous lord* of whom Leo Hebreo spoke with the fervor of one of the guests at the *Symposium*? Who is that lord but Love? . . .

§ 50. *Strength of love in the formation of a personality*

. . . Love is the monarch, the tyrant, and its despotic power comes dressed in a visible *grace*, the sign of predilection and right, which makes it acceptable to those who suffer from it. The diversity of its action is infinite, not only because of its selfishness but also for its omnipotence. No law governs the time when nor the way in which it is expressed, nor does it preserve any kind of logic in its modifications. It arrives in a whirlwind, becomes calm and finally disappears, with the

genial or demonic spontaneity which exceeds all human anticipation. Mystery, which the beautiful myth of Psyche made the condition of its fidelity and permanence, is the environment in which its eternal and Protean essence is unfolded. Although, abstractedly considered, love is a fundamental force that represents the pristine and most simple idea in the order of the soul, nothing equals true and concrete love in complexity. For its most exquisite weaving resumes and reassumes everything, until it identifies itself with the living, organic unity of our spirit. As a large flowing river swells with contributions of its tributaries, as the bonfire mounts upwards as it ignites everything that falls into it, so love, appropriating for itself whatever other passions it finds in the soul, fuses them with itself, forces them into its scheme of things, and permits them to do nothing but honor and obey it. Not only does it enslave them like a master, but it also creates them like a father, because there is nothing in the human heart which does not have its origin in love—if not as a derivation and complement, at least as a limit and reaction. So wherever it breathes, desire and hope, admiration and enthusiasm are born; when it departs, tedium and melancholy, indecision and depression are born; when it encounters obstacles and war, hatred and fury, wrath and envy are born. And the plastic and modeling power of personality which each one of these movements of the soul brings with itself, unites by returning to the bosom of love which gathers them, with the greatest and most powerful of all: that of love itself. And the supreme power of accumulation and double impulse is at the same time one of order and discipline. It is the regulating force which shows each one of those subordinate powers their place; in the proportion which they contribute, their degree; at the occasion on which they manifest themselves, their time. So you can imagine the immense part which is

attributed to the rule of love in the work of instituting, fortifying and reforming our personality.

§ 51. *The emotion of the barbarian*

Since love is infinite in its objectives and differences, they have part in its fundamental power. But there is a kind of love that increases life in the animated. Even before society was organized, it was already sketched in the first arrangements and harmonies of things, in the *eternal feminine* that the poet perceived in creation and in the inherent virile energy which complements and enhances that eternal grace and sweetness. It shows the power of love with all its conquering forces—hence we usually think of it as the model and pattern of all love, and we give it this divine name. And in the heroic consecration of vocation, in the intimate omen by which ability declares itself and marks out the course along which the powers of life must develop, this powerful magician is frequently the ruler.

Thus this gentle divinity, which is incarnate in the form of a child, smiles and plays in the shadows with the thousand threads of human history. If it is love with its characteristic, undisputed supremacy that has given civilization its basic elements, since love was charged with tying the social knot by inrooting in the bosom of Mother Earth the wandering and unstable primitive society so that the warm hearths might one day organize them into clans, civilization, in its highest sense, as a progressive triumph of the spirit over the viciousness of animalism, as an energy which smooths, polishes and stimulates, as a light that transfigures and beautifies, is indebted to the stimulus of love for its most beautiful traits. Near the cradle of civilization, tradition has always placed as tutelary shades the prophetic women born for some kind



of communication with the divine, the prophetesses, Pythonesses and sorceresses: the Deborahs, Femonoës and Medeas; not so much, perhaps, as a memory or symbol of great powers of creation and initiation which have really been present in the soul of woman, inasmuch as the inspired suggestions, unconsciously enveloped in the magnetic power of love when Nature exalts it most, inflame and feed those powers in the soul of man. Transforming itself and rising in unison with the spirit of human societies, love in them is the motivating force and inducement that contributes to the perspicuity of all faculties, to the success of all endeavors and to the beauty of all appearances.

When I picture to myself the first dawning of the emotion of love in the fierce heart where only lust had dwelt before, I see a coarse, simple barbarian who, as if possessed with an alien spirit, returns contemplative from a conversation in which he has shown thought, the moderator of blind impulse, and tenderness by which desire is ennobled and spiritualized. When he arrives at the edge of a small stream where the water is calm he stops to see his image. I see him push back his tawny hair from his grim countenance and conceive a hatred for his nudity; for the first time he longs for the beautiful and plans its beginnings in a timid and scarcely recognizable form, from which will later come the inspiration for celestial archetypes in bronze and marble. Soon, as he looks about him, everything appears to him richer in virtues and deeper in meaning—either because they suggest to him new ways of behavior, new grace and charms in the game of love, or because they speak with mysterious sympathies to that spirit which, in a divine way, has robbed him of his heart. I see that, under the influence of that same sweet novelty, a vague, ineffable music flows in the depth of his soul, which has desires, yet can not become a distinct melody and touch

the souls of others, until desire undoes the sleeping spell of his mind and awakens I know not what reminiscences of murmuring waters and sylvan echoes—a desire that will give birth to the oaten flute of Antigenides. . . . Later harmony is re-incarnated in the three-stringed lyre with its richer cadence. I see him, tempted by the sweetness of sound, feeling the impulse to dance, in which the games of love acquire tempo and rhythm; and verse begins suddenly to give to the language of the passional soul the voice that intensifies its message. I see the arm of the barbarian demolish the moss-covered rocks that formed his first abode; and, obeying a stimulus to consecrate a sanctuary to love to exalt it, I see him erecting the column, the arch, the vault, the firm and well-constructed house, under whose roof the furniture of the rustic hut will be transformed into a splendor and exquisiteness that will demand the skill of an artisan, the clay cup into the golden vessel and the silver goblet, the rough-hewn trunk into a chair worthy of a lord, a stretched-out skin into the wide, canopied bridal bed which beautiful, tender Love protects with a finger on his lips, as he did when he visited Psyche in the night, and the smoky fire into the lamp whose clear and serene light illumines, as does reason, when it dawns among the shadows of instinct or of feelings which grow wings in the larvae of sensation.

## § 52. *Love and personal culture*

The individual is humanity reduced to a small scale; each one as he comes from the hands of Nature before he has been subjected to any of the laws of social intercourse and custom is a barbarian as primitive as any. And in the work of civilizing oneself, which begins in the untamed fierceness of the child, and reaches its culmination in the perfection of the

patrician, of the hidalgo, of the supreme example of a race that flourishes in an illustrious, proud and opulent city, the introduction of love is, as it was at the dawn of human culture, a force that excites and complements all the arts that help in such a work, both the most superficial which end with suave words and graceful forms, as well as those which are more profound expressions of sentiment and judgment. From the delightful gallery of the *Decameron* stands out the well-drawn figure of Cimon of Chipre, the stupid, indolent peasant incapable of being taught to improve his unpolished manners or to yield to emulation, cajolery and example. Yet his love for the beautiful Ephigenia gives him, merely by the Orphic power of her beauty, a sudden and marvelous cultivation of all the powers of his soul and body until he is changed into a refined gentleman, the most versatile in his abilities and charms in his knowledge and his subtle understanding that could be found anywhere. By a similar conception of the civilizing power of love George Sand's character, Mauprat, in whom a rustic nature, stimulated by this passion, rises to the sublime unconsciousness of the enlightened person and to spiritual heights.

§ 53. *The legend about drawing and printing. Love in vocations*

This is why legend, so vividly significant, associates this divine power with the origins of invention and the smiling dawn of the arts.

Do you remember the ancient tradition of how men acquired the mastery of drawing? A young Corinthian was taking leave of his beloved. The light of a lamp cast his shadow on the wall. Moved by the desire to keep his image with her, she conceived the idea of taking a flint or a nail or perhaps

it was a hairpin and in this way she copied it, tracing the outline that the shadow threw upon the wall. Thanks to her simple art which would assuage the pain that absence had in store for her, men learned to copy the form of things on a flat surface.

This tradition seems to appear again in the story that grew up about the art of printing in centuries past. A Flemish man of Harlem was seeking relief from the pain which the absence of his betrothed caused him in the solitude of the country. He happened to pass by some willows filled with new sap and it occurred to him to pull off some fresh bark upon which he rudely carved words that love dictated to him or in which he could give vent to his grief. He used to continue this pastime, until one day, engraving a whole letter, destined for the sweet absent one on a piece of willow bark, he wrapped it in parchment and went off with it. When he unfolded it later, he found the writing reproduced on the parchment, thanks to the moisture of the sap; and according to the legend, this was what, once known by Gutenberg, deposited in his mind the germ of his sublime invention. A lie with the soul of truth! Love's inspiration spurring the mind to seek out strange devices, the observation of small things as the beginning for the discovery of great ones—does this not express the whole philosophy of human invention? Is this not the synthesis, anticipated by ingenious intuition, of all that psychological analysis finds miraculous in genius?

In the *Gilliat* of *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* the gigantic imagination of Victor Hugo personifies the demiurgic virtue of love which inspires the soul of a rude, ignorant mariner with the heroic powers and the subtle craftiness by which he subdues Nature and extracts her hidden treasures.

Love, being the father and master of all the passions of the soul, produces through them all the arts that necessity de-

mands and the desire of every passion which subjugates us. It produces inventions, inspired by ambition for glory or for wealth, the artifices and primpings to improve one's appearance, the tricks that jealousies scheme, the expedients to which simulation has recourse, the snares that vengeance lays; and from that keenness that the amorous sentiment stamps upon the inventive faculty often arises the lasting invention which is added forever to the store of mankind's ingeniousness and cleverness, although originally it might have served a purely personal need.

Because of love's inspiration to ennoble and improve, it is the best initiating power in the greatest vocations of energy and intelligence. Moved by the desire to rise above its condition and to merit the high objective (it is always ideally high) of its passionate yearnings, the soul, indolent until then, or resigned to its humility, seeks within itself the germ that will make it great, finds it and cultivates it with a vigorous will.

Such is the story of the Jewish shepherd who, since he is in love with the daughter of his master, wishes to raise himself to her station; he finally becomes the Rabbi Akiba, the foremost Talmud scholar. In the same way love made of that poor coppersmith of Naples, Antonio Solario, an artist in an improvised vocation. He was striving to reach the social standing of the family of the painter in whose house his heart was held captive: he more than succeeds for he attains both love and glory together. Just as moving are the cases of two other masters of the brush: Quentin Metsys, the blacksmith of Antwerp, transfigured by love became the first great artist to give us the sentiment of Nature and joy in Flemish painting; and the Spaniard Ribalta who, just like Solario, sought at a painter's house both the proximity of a pair of eyes and the norm of his vocation.

Of all that history and legend relate about the Moslem prophet there is perhaps nothing that interests and moves us with such a warmth of human reality as the influence which is attributed to his love for Cadija at the beginning of his apostleship. Cadija is, through the pure science of love more than the Hijera of the prophet: she tunes his soul, lends him faith when he has none in himself, she gives wings to the inspiration which is to deify him. . . .

But how much more must a love, strengthened and illumined by hope, help divine energies, if even disillusion in love often produces an exalted disinterested worship that improves the man who adores! Is it not said that an unfortunate passion for the daughter of Van der Ende, his master, was the incentive that inspired the thought and the will of Spinoza? She, by refusing to correspond with him, made him seek a new object for his desires in the conquest of knowledge—that order, coming whence it did, became an almost religious commandment in the spirit of that stainless man.

Heroic valor, even more than any other manifestation of the will, leans upon this sweet support of love. Along with the vocation of knighthood is born the vocation of the lady, and there are not any significant feats of arms, whether they are performed with an ambition for fortune or for glory, that are not marked by the arrow of the god who appears on the shield of Alcibiades. Without mentioning the Zenobias, Penthesileas, Semiramises, there is a kind of Amazonian heroism over which neither Herakles nor Theseus will prevail—it is that which uses the warrior's arm as the instrument of its deeds and the will of the Amazons as both its inspiration and reward, while she remains calm and sublime in the attitude of hope and contemplation. This is the eternal heroism of Dulcinea, a greater fighter of battles from the Olympus of her knight's imagination than the Queen of Nineveh facing

her hosts. Whoever has read in Baldassarro Castiglione the most perfect, courtly theories on human love, will not forget that page where the influence of love on the courage of the warrior is represented with such grace and warmth; where it is so picturesquely affirmed that an army of lovers fighting in the presence of their ladies could overcome any forces, unless another army similarly spurred on and inflamed by the stimulus of love should come against them. The delightful prose writer illustrates this by recalling what took place at the siege of Granada. When the time for the captains of that heroic nobility came to leave for the skirmishes with the Moors, the ladies-in-waiting to the Catholic Queen formed an illustrious and most serene jury and assembled to witness the combat. The tacit sanction of their eyes and the magic signs of their movements, a gesture, a smile, exalted the enthusiasm of their knights to the most famous manifestation of gallantry and valor.

§ 54. *Love and art*

But if every aptitude and vocation follows the stimulus of love, no gift of the souls responds with such eagerness to its inducements and becomes so intimate with it as the poet or the artist whose very aim is to feel and to realize the beautiful. Under the maternal idea of beauty, love and poetry fraternize. The instinctive desire for the beautiful and the impulse to propagate life by means of the lure of the beautiful: this is love; and from this very sentiment of beauty, when it is stamped with desire to give birth to imaginary creatures who may enjoy as individual and as palpitating a life as those which love conceives in the world, gush the fountains of Poetry and Art. Love is the pole, the quintessence of sensibility, and the artist is the incarnation of sensibility. Love is the

exaltation that transcends the usual limits of imagination and feeling, and this we call inspiration in the poet. Wherever there are Art and Poetry, wherever there are books, paintings, statues or remembrances of these things, it will not be necessary to strain the eyes or the memory to discern the expression of love. As for the characters and the nuances of sentiment that Art depicts and the events and scenes of life that it takes for itself and makes plastic in its fictions, there is no spring so deep as that which flows from the bosom of love.

He who loves is, in the depths of his imagination, a poet and an artist although he may lack the gift for moulding that divine spirit which he possesses into a real, tangible work. The interior operation by virtue of which the mind of the artist seizes upon an object of reality, polishes, adorns and perfects it, relieving it of its impurities, in order to make it conform to the ideal notion that he discerns in the fire of his inspiration, is not fundamentally different from that which constantly occupies and abstracts the thoughts of the lover, a dweller, like the artist, in a world of dreams. Through spontaneous and unconscious activity, that knows no rest, the enamored soul transfigures the image that reigns in the sanctuary of his memory and makes it better and more beautiful than reality; he adds to it perfections and blessings, graces and virtues. He disregards those traits which do not harmonize with the real one, with the beautiful entity, and thus he employs a process of selection no different from that which produces the noble creations of Art. Because of this, it was the belief of ancient learning that love which one has for an object because it is beautiful is nothing but the recognition of the beauty that is in one's own soul; it transcends its object, because the object becomes beautiful in proportion to the beauty which emanates from the contemplator. Is it possible that the real object gains more in passing through the im-



agination of the poet than the beloved one on entering the thoughts of the lover? Can there be a brush that caresses and touches up a figure more beautifully and perfectly, or a verse or melody that more delicately distills the spiritual essence of an object, than the thought of a lover when he retouches and idealizes the image that he carries sculptured in the deepest recesses of himself? . . .

This exquisite interior art often advances and stimulates the other: that which is realized externally by works which men will recognize and admire; frequently the vocation of the poet or the artist waits to reveal itself for the moment when love makes its first appearance in the soul either in a potential way, still uncertain as to its definite choice, but nevertheless excited, in diffuse and dreamlike restlessness, due to the forces of Nature; or brought to light with a determined and conscious object by the irresistible affinity which joins two souls at once and forever. Just as the gift of unlearned languages was imparted to humble fishermen at the descent of the Holy Ghost, so the spirit of love, when it permeates and inspires an adolescent soul, usually communicates to him the gift of divine language with which to render to his beloved the offerings of his heart and to arouse, as an echo of them, the praises and sympathies of other souls to whom he has revealed the image that he worships. The beginnings of Dante's inspiration are mingled with the visions and exaltations of love that are related in the pages of the *Vita Nuova*; for, after that symbolic dream which is recounted in the third chapter, the first sonnet is born:

*A ciascun'alma presa e gentil core . . .*

The enchantment that the beauty of dona Catalina de Ataide produces in Camoens marks the dawn of his poetic vo-

cation. And that of Byron's dates from the precocious passion which the angelic vision of Margaret Parker kindled in his young heart. If indignation led Juvenal to make verses (as before it had awakened the vengeful inspiration of Archilochus)—that indignation is the reaction through which an unrequited love becomes hatred. Even in the average man, it will be rare, presupposing that there is a certain elemental, artistic instinct, for the first vibration of love that moves the heart not to seek to translate itself into an ephemeral impulse to poetize. But that impulse will soon vanish and be smothered by the very prosaicness of the soul and by that which the soul gathers in its quotidian affairs, but not without leaving testimony of itself in those poor, innocent and timid verses that perhaps still lie in a closet of the house among faded papers, as do those flowers pressed between leaves of books. Or if it is a question of a simple, rustic soul, the testimony of his ingenious song possessed of a mysterious charm and accompanied by the amorous notes of a guitar is carried on the night air redolent with the fragrance of the fields. . . . Just as the usual accent of an impassioned voice naturally tends to make its inflection musical, so with regard to the form of expression the soul warmed by an intense sentiment is naturally inclined toward the poetic, the plastic and the figurative. How many faded and unknown letters deserve to be disinterred from the chest of love's relics in order to show how the inspiration of love can draw from a spirit free from all literary vanity and inexperienced in the art of style treasures of simple beauty, of vibrant and picturesque expression that can surpass the fruits of full-blown genius!

Love is the revelation of poetry; the magistrery that consecrates the poet, the visitation through whose medium he who is no poet becomes one. In the workings of the austere, serious mind, in the enterprises of the sage and the philoso-

pher, the force that completes the harmonious unity of the work of genius usually comes from Love. Thus it adds to the herculean sum of knowledge and to the construction of philosophical systems that ineffable element inrooted in the intuitions of sensibility: the part of mystery, religion, poetry, grace, beauty, which was lacking in the great work but which, after a real or imaginary love is infused in it, gives it new life and spirit, new meaning and transcendency. When the memory of Clotilda de Vaux, acting like a talisman on the soul of Comte, effects a change in the tone of his thought, the horizon of his philosophy expands with an ideal, religious perspective, which, until then, had been absent from it. Through communication with love, the philosopher, arid before, discovers, dominates and arrives almost at the unction of the hierophant.

§ 55. *The provoking act. The anch'io. Conversation and reading*

The natural spontaneity of infancy and the restlessness of adolescence, goaded by the urges of love, are crucial periods during which potentialities and energies of a soul come to light. But, moreover, the definite and categorical announcement of one's vocation may frequently refer to an exact moment, to a specific occasion. There is a *provoking act* which offers an opportunity for an aptitude latent within ourselves to recognize itself and to assume control of the will. We can almost always classify this act within the bounds of that great force of unification which supplements the work of inheritance and maintains a unity and similarity among men, whether you call it imitation or sympathy, example or suggestion.

Almost proverbial has that phrase become which Correggio,

then only an obscure young man, uttered as he stood, exalted by an unknown aspiration, in front of one of Raphael's paintings, "*Anch'io sono pittore!*" I too am a painter! . . . Those words are the clue to an infinite series of acts in which direct perception or the knowledge obtained through reference and rumor of an accomplishment similar to others of which the aptitude itself is capable, has excited the first energetic and conscious impulse of vocation. With the *Anch'io sono pittore!* begins not only the story of Correggio, but that of many artists in color and stone: Fra Filippo Lippi who, when he sees Masaccio painting in his monastery, declares eternal fidelity to painting; the sculptor Pisano also becomes conscious of his ability before an old bas-relief of *Hippolytus*; and Verocchio who in the presence of the bronze and marbles at Rome, where Sixtus V has summoned him as master goldsmith, yields to the temptation of dropping the artisan's chisel for the sculptor's. Like examples can be found in any other kind of vocation: be it in music, when the composer Charpentier, who decided to study painting, hears a motet sung in a church and is converted to the art of Palestrina; or when the singer Garat hears a voice which calls him to the stage, while he is attending a performance of Gluck's *Armida*; or in oratory, where one may cite the classic example of Demosthenes who was carried away by a passion for eloquence the day he heard Calistratus' speech in the tribunal; or in dramatic creation which manifested its possibilities to the old Dumas through the suggestion of one of Shakespeare's plays; or in histrionic art as it was revealed in Ernest Rossi after seeing the actor Modena, and in Adrienne Lecouvreur by the impressions which dwelling near the theatre left upon her when she was a child; or again in astronomy which stimulates Herschel the day he first handles a celestial planisphere; or, finally, in medical art, when Ambrose Paré seeing the per-

formance of a surgical operation in his childhood recognizes the eternal objective of his attention and interest. In the realm of ethics, the *anch'io* is no less efficacious. The ascetic vocation of Hilarion, when he meets the hermit Anthony, reveals one of the most familiar ways in which the sudden impulse of *grace* was evinced in those days of faith.

The material presence of the object or the act is not needed to transmit the inspiration of the *anch'io*; the knowledge of them is enough. Perhaps it is the resonance of the triumph obtained by another person in a certain type of activity that stimulates the indolent and indecisive spirit to try its strength in it—for example, when Montesquieu engrosses the attention of his contemporaries with his *L'Esprit des Lois*, Helvetius is moved to emulate him and so he seeks retirement and solitude that he may lose himself in his work. Perhaps it is the miraculous prestige of an invention or a discovery—for instance, when the novelty of the lightning rod makes the future physicist Charles realize the possibilities of its application. But if the consciousness of an aptitude comes from the perception of a material object, this act can not be classified within the *anch'io*; in certain cases it is not the work of another person but of Nature herself, for she brings before the eyes of the subject that which leaves in him an indelible and fertile suggestion. There is nothing in Nature incapable of exercising that suddenly evoked virtue regarding any volitional or intellectual function. The same sensation which passes unnoticed over most people may strike a spirit in which it hits a hidden target; it remains fixed there like an arrow and produces the smarting of a spur-rowel. The spectacle of the sea seen for the first time, a tree which captivates the attention with its beauty and strangeness, invoke sensations which many have experienced without any significant results, but the first sight of the sea was, for Cook, and later

for that extraordinary woman, an Amazon of peaceful proclivities, called Ida Pfeiffer, the revelation of their remarkable instinct for travel; and Humboldt tells us in his *Cosmos* how from a fan-palm and a huge dracaena which he saw in the botanical gardens at Berlin when he was a child there came the precocious announcement of the unquenchable desire which took him to distant lands.

*Conversation*, that common and simplest instrument of human sociability with which fools show their foolishness, with which the frivolous compete with the noises of the wind, with which evil-doers sound the echoes of scandal, conversation, almost always an undignified diversion, is an influence fecund in suggestion which may imprint superior meaning on life when it brings two minds into contact. The poet Boscan and Navagero, the ambassador from Venice, were talking in the court at Toledo and, as it was fitting to speak of poetry, Navagero gave Boscan the idea which inspired him to introduce Italian metres into Castilian letters. Buffon, still without any definite predilection for any branch of study, was traveling in the company of the young duke of Kingston and from his conversations with the duke's tutor, an assiduous student of natural sciences, Buffon definitely decided his course. Cartwright, a rather mediocre poet, was heading for a district neighboring his own. On his way he engaged in conversation with some merchants from Manchester who, by their chatting, awakened his interest in the advancement of mechanics. He devoted himself to it and became a famous inventor.

Winslow was studying theology; a friend with whom he often chatted was a student of medicine; it happened, through the reciprocal suggestions of their conversations, that each one wanted to change his studies for that of the other, and the day arrived when Winslow became the greatest anatomist of the XVIIIth century.

But no kind of suggestion is as powerful in revealing vocation or bringing to light unknown aptitudes as *reading*. The distance which separates men in time and space presents an obstacle to the act of mutation; books remove this obstacle by giving words an infinitely more flexible and lasting medium than the waves of the air. For people whose attitude is action, books, the best instrument of authority and sympathy, are, even more frequently than a real example of a living model, the awakening and guiding force of the will. Not always can the potential hero in action find in reality and within his eyes' reach the hero in action who would fascinate him and carry him off in flight. But books offer him, in an imperishable legion, ready to be summoned at any moment, guides that may lead him to the discovery of himself. Thus the reading of the *Iliad* gave Alexander a model in Achilles; and so Julian was inspired by the history of Alexander; and the novel of Xenophon initiated Scipio Emilianus into the worship of Cyrus the Great. Thanks to a book, Charles XII could always have before him the image of Philip's son; and Frederick of Prussia that of Charles XII. From Cæsar's *Commentaries* came the impetus for Folard's vocation, and to this book was it due that the spirit of the conqueror of Gaul was kept alive in the world to serve as adviser and friend of Bonaparte and Condé.

Among other vocations of the will, like that of apostolical enthusiasm, glowing in the flames of faith, or boundless human love or that of the ardent practice of a conception of moral welfare, books are also sources of inspiration.—*Tolle, lege!* . . . Was it not a command to read that was uttered by the ineffable voice which Augustine heard in the moment of grace? Hilaire de Poitiers, Fabius Claudius, who became Fulgentius in his new life, forsook their gods through the inspiration of their reading. This book, that now appears to my

imagination, half opened, in the form of an arc, over the globe of the world, this book, vast as the sea, high as the firmament, at times more radiant than the sun, at others more shadowy than the night, that has something of the lion and the lamb, of the bitter wave and sweet honeycomb; this book, that begins before the birth of light and finishes when the earth returns to eternal chaos, has been, for twenty centuries, a promotive force, a revealer, an educator of sublime vocations; an immense catapult of which the arm that controls the celestial bodies has availed itself thousands of times to send a human soul to the greatest heights from whence it may illuminate the rest. This book gave Columbus the presentiment of his most extraordinary discovery. From it Luther received a virile impetus toward liberty and reason. In it Lincoln learned to love slaves.—Do you remember a page of the *Contemplations* where the poet tells us how, in his infancy, while playing, he finds a Bible on a book-shelf in the house; he opens it and begins to read; he spends the whole morning in its perusal which fills him with surprise and delight, like that, he says, of a child who captures a little bird of the field and is delighted to feel the softness of its feathers? In a similar way Bossuet, still a child, felt the trembling of growing wings on his shoulders.

Reading is the way in which the stimulating force of the *anch'io* most commonly manifests itself in revealing the aptitude of the sage, the writer or the poet. Indeed, if antiquity recorded how Thucydides discovered his genius as a historian by the reading (or by hearing read, which is the same thing) of a passage from Herodotus; and how Sophocles discovered his poetic soul through Homer's epics; and Epicurus his ability as a philosopher through the works of Democritus,—so in modern times, the examples are very numerous. We have that of La Fontaine, who recognized his vocation by read-



ing, at a rather mature age, an ode of Malherbe; that of Silvio Pellico, who was born to letters after he had tasted the bitterness of Foscolo's *I Sepolcri*; that of Lalande, who conceived a desire to know the secrets of heaven after he had become acquainted with one of Fontenelle's works; that of Reid who was aroused to philosophical speculation—having been stimulated by the reading of Hume. . . . And even among those who have an almost innate consciousness of a vocation,—are there any who can not refer, more or less precisely, to some point in their reading which made their vocation clearer to them, orientated it and gave it definite form?

Through the power of suggestion with which a strongly reflected image imitates or surpasses that power which the actual presence of the object would exert, it has been frequently the case that a scientific or artistic vocation owes its impulse to the reading of a literary work. *Notre-Dame de Paris*—the novel, not the cathedral—consecrated Didron to archæology. Augustin Thierry through his reading of *Les Martyrs* discovered his aptitude as an interpreter of the past. The case of the great colorful historian can be cited as illustrative of the intensity with which reading can come to operate in the depths of the soul where unconscious aptitudes and dispositions sleep, and of how it may awaken them with a sudden and marvelous efficacy. When Thierry, still a child, reads the war-song of the Franks in Chateaubriand's book, a tremor, like that of one who has received a celestial annunciation, passes through him. Rising from his seat, he paces the room with long strides, while his lips repeat the refrain of the song with a heroic fervor. Henceforth, the picturesque and dramatic reanimation of dead reality was the one dream of his life, and the Norman conquerors become restless in the depths of their graves, in preparation for the resurrection which will make them immortal.

§ 56. *The anch'io which works through contrast.* "If you go to the left, I'll go to the right"

The *anch'io* is, then, a great evoker of vocations; but one should not take this to imply the servile imitation of the work or of the author from whom the example comes. The unchanging characteristic of the *anch'io* is the emulation that it inspires for the exercising of a certain aptitude. Moreover, within this extensive similarity, it frequently happens (and especially when it is a question not so much of discovering the aptitude as of giving it a definite direction) that a desire for *contrast* with the works of others, or a stimulus in the sense of doing a thing in some different or opposite manner to that which produced the triumph of others, is the energy that intervenes to fructify the vocation.

This difference which is longed for and sought after may refer either to the kind of vocation which is to be rendered fruitful within the same art or the general manifestation of activity, or to the ideas that are to be taken as its banner, or to the conditions of the style whose perfection one aspires to attain in its highest degree.

It is a very common occurrence that the lofty superiority, attained by a great spirit in a certain field of art or literature, makes another person, with similar tastes, abandon it. In his endeavor to attain as great a glory in the cultivation of a different field, his vocation, happily, is made clear, for, if it had not been for this beneficent desire to be different, his vocation would perhaps have never risen from that relative inferiority which characterized its first application. When the theatre reëchoed with the applause of Lope's comedies it was time for Cervantes to throw away the pen that wrote *The Commerce of Algiers* and *Numantia*, which he dreamed would shape the course of the drama; the pen he wields hence-

forth is that of Cide Hamete Benengeli. This case is not unique. Walter Scott began by writing narrative poems, like *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*, but when Byron appeared on the horizon, and in a glorious flight scaled the heights of poetry, Walter Scott abandoned his path toward them and sought to attain a similar superiority in prose: a resolution which, for him, meant a finding of his definite and real vocation, and, for literature, the flowering of the historical novel. Nor is the case of Herculano different from this—the great Portuguese historian and novelist who abandoned verse for prose, where he was to discover his true and undisputed realm, after the boisterous triumphs of Garret had led him to leave poetry.

Just as frequently are the outlines and the character of a work, the details of its technique, of its style, of its significance, determined by contradiction. The new arrival says to the one who got there before him, as Abraham did to Lot, "If you go to the left, I'll go to the right." The reaction against the tenderness and languor of Metastasio's verses produced the severity and stoicism of Alfieri's style. The deliberate thought of eclipsing Caravaggio's glory by employing a manner of painting that is the very opposition of that brutality and fervor that characterize the master from Bergamo gives to Guido Reni the definite norm of his art. And Leonello Spada, his vanity as a beginner wounded by the scornful jests of Guido, nurses his anger by the thought that, in his turn, he will humiliate his mocker some day by snatching away from him, not only the prestige of his fame but also the popularity of his style. "If Guido succeeds by his delicacy, his composition, and his prettiness," says Leonello, "I will triumph by being violent and bold."

For the innovating impulse of great reformers, of great iconoclasts, of all those who may open new ways to sentiment

or to reason, this spur, which is the temptation to deny the master so as to surpass him, is more efficacious than it appears to be; and it helps to explain the continual *rhythm* of the successive manifestations of the human mind.

There was, undoubtedly, in Zola's revolutionary initiative a sincere conviction, a profound understanding of his age, and a most powerful suggestion of his own temperament. And his ambition to emulate the glory of the great romantics by the activity of an opposite kind of originality helped these traits to exaggerate the nature of his reform and the processes of his art—an originality for which the novels of George Sand and Victor Hugo served as a *negative model*.

Upon the road which a genius selects to reach the glory which he has seen shining about the names of others who have already attained it by known paths, there usually reappears the triumphant paradox of the Discoverer who was resolved to find the way to the land where the sun rises by going toward the land where the sun sets.

§ 57. *Ascertaining the genus of vocation and not the species.*  
*The narrowly restrained aptitude; spirits with only one theme*

It frequently happens that the person groping to find his particular mission in life, discovers the *genus* of his vocation but not the *species*; he chances upon the general category from which his aptitude will evolve, but not upon its particular aspect nor the concrete application appropriate to its peculiar nature. Instinct announces a vocation to him in a vague and indefinite manner, and thoughtful selection leads him to error in his attempt to follow the suggestion of his instinct. He is like a blind man, who may succeed in entering his own house without a guide, but makes his mistake in pass-

ing through the door of a room that does not belong to him.

It is a common experience with men of letters to begin almost always by writing verse, thus testing the faculties which, once they are matured, most of them will direct into other channels. The example of Fontenelle, nothing but a mediocre poet in the first stage of his development, but later an illustrious critic, is a case which the most limited observation can corroborate with numerous others.

The great Corneille, before shaping French tragedy in his bronze-like Roman soul, intended to establish his dramatic expression not in the mask of tragedy but in that of comedy. Six comedies preceded *Medea*; but this is no place to assert conclusively that his first selection was false, for it was that same Corneille who later was to cut the precious gem, *Le Menteur*. At least his selection did not interpret the basic and superior significance of the aptitude that came to its perfect flower in his tragedies. Another case that illustrates this point is that of Bellini. The future composer of *Norma* heard the voice that called him to music early in his life; but the road which he took to answer the call showed that he was not conscious of his true superiority. Only after attempting, with unfortunate results, to be an interpreter of the works of others, now as a singer, now as a musician, did Bellini turn his interest to composition. In painting it is easy to give numerous examples; that of Giulio Clovio, for instance, the great Italian miniature painter, to whom his special gift for exquisite tiny paintings revealed itself only after he had vainly tried his hand at pictures of ordinary size; or that of the younger Van Ostade, a poor genre painter in his adolescence, later an original and admirable landscape artist.

It happens that some people, in order to particularize the true species of their vocation, find it necessary to severely restrict its objective, and only by means of this very narrow

limitation do they find the specific nature of their ability. These people are quite the reverse of those other universal and versatile souls whom we mentioned before. Thus, in painting, some artists have known how to paint flowers and nothing but flowers: Van Huysum, Monnoyer, Van Spaendonck, or rather Redouté, who, painting portraits and sacred images, never rose above a discreet mediocrity until the contemplation of some bouquets by Van Huysum stimulated him to devote his palette to flowers—they have embalmed his name in lasting fragrance. In the spirit of Alfred de Dreux, the vocation for painting was inextricably united with an impression of some beautiful horses which had captivated his fancy in childhood when he used to watch them on the elegant drives. His ability and this impression were so identified with each other that the brush in his hands was nothing more than a means of picturing that obsessing image in a hundred different ways.

In literature there is a significant parallel in de Heredia, the fanatic devotee of an unappeasable little idol, the versifier absolutely determined to master the subtle and precious technique of the sonnet by the means of a refined culture and a persevering labor. In science, an analogous case may be found in the naturalists who have limited their field of observation to a single species, dedicating all their life's fervor and zeal to it, now to the bees, like Huber, or to the ants, like Meyer, and in the astronomers that have limited their observations to one heavenly body, like Fresner to the moon.

In the same manner that the course of civilization presents epochs of an harmonious amplitude wherein the advantages of a primitive civilization are balanced with those of a refined one, individuals tend, without a degeneration of their efficient energies, toward a universal capacity, as in the Greece of Pericles, the XIIIth century, or the Renaissance. There are also, in societies that have reached a thorough cultural de-

velopment, times of most detailed classifications, of minute divisions, in the functions of the mind and will—epochs and societies in which even the best souls seem to be reduced to that fragmentary nature which the supernatural beings sometimes assume, like those described to Cyrano de Bergerac by the Socratic demon,—bodies condemned to make themselves known to man only through a single sense, either through the ear, when oracles' voices speak; or the sight, with the apparition of ghosts; or the touch, with the Succubi—without ever being able to present itself in a complete and harmonious perception.

§ 58. *Vocation that is defined through successive eliminations*

When a plan of the will does not accompany its image, either instinctively or through habit, with the inspiration for the movement which it wants to accomplish, the spirit gages and essays different movements to give the desired one time to appear. In this way, he who does not have an intuitive and immediate knowledge of his vocation seeks it, through trials and successive elimination, until he comes upon it. A vague sentiment of their own superiority, a stimulus of energetic and enterprising ambition, this is all that some souls destined for greatness know about themselves, before they test themselves in the work of the world. And that is why there are many great lives that begin with a period of hesitancies and trials during which the spirit attempts the most diverse kinds of activities and abandons one after the other, until it recognizes the one to which it is best adapted, and remains rooted there.

The abandonment of those early tentative vocations sometimes originates from abhorrence or from the detection of our error regarding each one of them, because, once their

secrets are known and they are treated with intimacy, they fail to satisfy the spirit or to fulfill its idea of them. At other times, the abandonment being less voluntary, the detection of the error may be due to one's own aptitude because the inconsistent person did not find within himself the energies that correspond to this particular kind of activity, or because the judgment of others did not recognize or stimulate them. An example of the first—the deception relative to each activity considered per se and not in regard to his own desire to exercise it—is furnished us from antiquity by Lucian. This intrepid mocker of the gods, after having found his true path, tried his hand at the most varied kinds of activities and none succeeded in satisfying him. He began by throwing away the sculptor's chisel, deeming it a servile instrument. He studied jurisprudence, but soon he neglected that, disgusted with arguments and frauds. Next he followed philosophy in the peripatetic fashion and so he gained repute in Greece, in Gaul and in Macedonia, but beneath the philosophizing of those decadent times he recognized the vanity of sophistry. From the dregs of that enduring disillusion, spontaneously and opportunely sprang the genius of the demolishing satirist, well prepared to attack the reality that had appeared to him abominable and ludicrous in so many different ways: such was Lucian's vocation. Even before him, we have a similar case,—Euripides, before realizing that he was summoned to be the continuator of Aeschylus and Sophocles, abandoned successively, through a long period of trials, the athlete's crown, the artist's brush, the orator's rostrum and the philosopher's toga. Some centuries afterwards a similar process of successive discoveries of error preceded the definite orientation of Van Helmont, the great chemist of the last years of the Renaissance, disappointed in the shallowness of literature, deceived by the uncertainties of jurisprudence, dis-



illusioned by the chimæras of magic, and the postulates of philosophy, until an inspiration in which he saw a supernatural command led him to seek a new manner of curing the diseases of the body and placed him in contact with the elements of things. The eager passion for common welfare, which had inflamed the self-denying soul of Pestalozzi from his earliest years, did not at once turn him to the great objective of education, but only after he had essayed various forms of activity, now ecclesiastical studies, now law, now farming.

But these vacillating beginnings, as we have said, give rise, at other times, to cases where the natural disposition does not assert itself with sufficient audacity in places where the provisional vocation submits it to experience. Thus, it was not the disenchantment with art, nor with action, but the impossibility of arriving by means of either of them at the place of his dreams that reduced Stendhal to that attitude of unpleasant contemplation that was expressed by his late literary vocation, after he had sought fame as a painter, as a soldier and as a politician. The tempestuous youth of Rousseau shows an analogous succession of wavering and failing attempts: the wandering Ahasverus of all the arts and trades, now engraver or musician, teacher or diplomat. But in none of them does he find his equipoise or reach perfection, until, one day, chance rather than his will places a pen in his hand which he recognizes upon grasping it, as a well-bred horse recognizes its rider. Pen and hand are now united forever, because the ideas that are afloat in the spirit of the century eagerly awaiting expression make it necessary for this bond to endure.

### § 59. *How chance determines indecisions*

When the soul comes to a crossroad, both paths of which attract it with equal force or inducements, it is curious to

see how, at times, it relies upon fate for an answer as the solution of the problem incapable of being solved by a determination of the will. When the imperative *motive* does not arise from deliberation, it is created artificially by means of a compromise with chance. Famous vocations have come to light in this way, if one does not exaggerate the value of anecdotes, whose depth of human truth has in its favor, on the other hand, the incalculable transcendency of what seems smallest and most trivial in the secret creation of the great.

Iacopo Sforza, the founder of that heroic family of the Renaissance, was originally a humble peasant from Romagna. When the military turbulence of his times reached him and he had to decide whether he would adopt that calling or continue plowing his lands, he entrusted the solution of his problem to chance. He drew an axe from his girdle. Opposite him, in the cultivated field, there grew a thick tree. He would hurl the axe against the trunk and if, after striking it, the axe would fall to the ground, Iacopo would not modify the status quo of his existence, but if perchance the weapon remained firm and fixed in the trunk, then henceforth the soldier's sword would be his hoe. The axe flew like a flash of lightning, the trunk received it in its bosom and retained it: Iacopo Sforza was forever consecrated to war. In a similar manner, Goethe tells how he solved his youthful indecisions between poetry and painting. He was sailing upon a river bordered by willows, when he hurled a dagger into the water. He saw that it did not sink for it was kept afloat by the floating branches: which signified, according to what he had agreed upon beforehand, that he was not to pursue vocations that rivalled the one which caused him to be the poet of *Faust*.

Among religious souls this appeal to fate is usually called a miracle. Saint Bernard in his coarse robes was the arbiter

of the destinies of the church but he renounced, because of his spirit of self-denial, many dignities and honors. In Milan the multitude insisted upon his occupying the episcopal chair which they offered him. He asked Providence to decide his fate: if his horse, without any guide, led him to the city, he would accept the high position; but he would refuse it if he were led to the country. The latter occurred. The life of the preacher of the Crusades continued its glorious humility.

§ 60. *False universality. Expansion must be manifested in contemplation*

When the vagueness and uncertainty of a vocation are dispelled by virtue of a fortunate circumstance that will awaken the intuition of the true aptitude as if by a flash of lightning; when they are dispelled by successive trials that eliminate the false vocations one by one until the true depths of the soul is reached; or by a voluntary impetuosity that, without an inspired selection or a patient observation of oneself, chooses any direction whatsoever although the latter may not coincide with the superior aptitude—this vague and uncertain vocation, by prolonging itself, generally translates itself not into abstinence and indolence but into an activity without a definite objective: into a false universality. It is the vain imitation of an unusual spirit who has no definite vocation because he is equally great in several vocations. It is the mediocrity caused by a shallow, diffuse application; a mean *Panurge*, not the sublime and exceedingly rare one.

When the inexperienced person who seeks his mission in life does not find the divisions of the functions of the spirit clearly defined in a well-organized society so that he may recognize a certain course for each difference in ability and

may be stimulated to a concrete and earnest application—his resultant bewilderment is a very common occurrence. And even when, because of the force of the instinct, an inner voice supplants the indefiniteness and vagueness of the exterior voices that might have coöperated with it; even when the soul is conscious of a particular aptitude—that vague diffusion of its own forces generally is, in view of the absence of a well-differentiated social organization, a necessity or a temptation to which the individual finally succumbs.

This is one of the obstacles that hinders the formation of a solid and fertile culture in new societies. For when I speak of false universality I refer to that which manifests itself in production, in action, in the *anch'io*, not to contemplative expansion, not to that easy and abundant interest, to that sympathetic and solicitous attention which is spread over everything and is alone capable of saving the *human* depths of the soul from the limitations of each occupation and each habit, a kind of expansion that was preached beside the statue of Ariel, and that is the more necessary for the purpose of maintaining the fundamental integrity of man, the more restricted and forced the object of the vocation is. To summarize, we can reduce the discipline of a wisely employed spiritual force to this: a firm and concrete determination in activity, a wide and varied objective in contemplation.

§ 61. *The volitional element that puts every aptitude into action. Vocation and the maladies of the will*

Every superior aptitude includes in itself, besides the natural traits of the faculty from which it springs, an element of a volitional nature that stimulates it to action and keeps it there. If the weakness of the specific faculty or the conspiracies of things explain many unsuccessful vocations, the

loss of aptitude, once it has shown itself real and true at the beginning, comes just as often from an insufficient or weak will.

In the grim and pallid group which stands at the door of the city of thought and gazes longingly at the threshold that it must not cross and angrily at those who do cross it—just like the one which Dante placed at the gates of the city of Dite, among shadows even more woeful than the devouring flames—in the grim and pallid group you can see the persevering, though incompetent, man and him who lacks both constancy and aptitude; but there is also another in whose soul aptitude lies in agony, as if crucified, nailed hand and foot by an exceedingly painful incapacity for doing its work. In him the enervation of the will, whose conscience, together with the sincerity of the inhibited gift, produces that bitter mixture that makes the heart overflow with humiliation and arrogance. It is the sombre posterity of Obermann, the aborted genius.

Sometimes the inactivity of aptitude does not follow the useless competition with itself that leaves the bitter taste of defeat. It is due to a natural insensibility to the flattery of emulation and fame and to the supreme pleasure of realizing the beauty of one's dreams and the truth that one perceives only at a distance. Or rather, this inactivity is due to a pleasurable, sophisticated laziness which, far from producing the hostile bitterness of the tragic failure or the cold disdain of the incurious dullard, becomes a benevolently ironic spectator and gives some slight attention and interest to the works of others from its epicurean pillow. It has been said that the sceptic is not capable of recognizing a hero although he may see and touch him. We might add, to complete this truthful observation, that he is not even capable of recognizing one when he carries a hero within himself. . . .

The gifts that are lost through these causes remain unknown in the shadows, just as those that are wasted by the unconsciousness of an aptitude; but even in those persons whose aptitude is known, because at some time it has manifested itself, it is not unusual for the idea to remain chained to the mind, because of the lack of a force to put it into execution. The painter Fromentin, meditating about the disproportion between his dreams of art and the reality of his work, often broke out into this exclamation, containing a tremendous truth for one who knows the inmost secrets of artistic invention— "*Oh, if I only dared! . . . If I only dared! . . .*" Other significant words, although somewhat different, to characterize the enervation of the will in the realm of art are those attributed to Fogelberg, the sculptor. Faced with a subject which was proposed to him, if he considered it good he argued to substantiate his refusal, "*The Greeks have already done it . . .*" and if he considered it risky, "*The Greeks would probably not have done it . . .*" How great was the influence which the indolent *dilettantism* of Alphonse Karr exerted upon the soul of Gatayés to convert him from a promising artist to a critic who was only mediocre! . . . An accurate personification of the student insensible to the stimulus of renown and to the necessity of creation is the most curious Magliabecchi who, during the Renaissance in Florence, accumulated a most colossal mass of learning while he remained in his workshop without anyone's suspecting it, until the secretary of Cosimo de Medici discovered that hidden treasure by chance. Amiel, living in the abstract seclusion of a bonze, showed no desire for publicity; on one of the pages of his *Journal intime* he defines his radical inability to create and his incapacity to choose among the throng of possible forms the correct one for the expression of each one of his thoughts. But fortunately in that same *Journal*

*intime* he left, without consciously planning to do so, the most decisive proof of the existence of a superior aptitude which, because of the illness of his will, he never actively manifested in the course of his life.

§ 62. *Vocations cut short by lack of will-power. Mannerisms.*  
*Examples of the progressive modification of work. Rest*  
*at mid-day*

To the lack of will which stifles the potential seed of the aptitude must be added that deficiency which leaves the aptitude abandoned and cut off after it has manifested itself and is well on the way to its development, whether this be due to its inability to find new forces with which to remove obstacles, when those forces which arose from the initial enthusiasm are exhausted, or because the desire contents itself with a mediocre triumph and considers this its goal while it has yet the means to attain a more exalted triumph.

And these kinds of weaknesses of the will are not expressed merely by abstinence or in the renunciation of one's task while one still has full spiritual strength, nor by a visible decadence in work, as is evident when an author already illustrious is satisfied to produce only sloppy, inferior works and to live in the reflection of an already acquired reputation. Often production which does not improve in quality is a sign, not that the author has reached a complete realization of his personality, but that he has felt the spur of the will, the vital and efficacious force of a stimulus, leave him. In this case, perhaps he chooses to be prolific, without adding any intensity, character, verve, he is then like the Ahas-verus of legend, who was forbidden to spend more than five coins at one time but who found invariably that niggardly sum in his pocket.

The mannerism that makes an artist confine his spirit within himself, is also frequently more of a limitation of the will than a defect of the intelligence. This occurs when the faculty for movement, with which the soul departs to renew its conception of the world and to explore the enemy's camp, becomes enervated or paralyzed. An artist who affects this mannerism is a Narcissus enchanted by the contemplation of his image. The water that flatters and stupefies him finally destroys him. Full power of the will always involves a certain natural tendency for evolution by which the work is modified as it grows. Raphael's art is a lofty and sublime example of this perpetual modification of one's work. It appears in a felicitous, gradual and continuous way, which we have previously compared to a graceful curve. From his first painting to his last, from the works in his early manner to those immortal creations of the Roman period, each canvas reveals a quality of his genius: it is a newly acquired learning, a new and distinct contemplation, wisely adapted, a discovery of a new treasure, whether it be by the suggestion of Perugino, of Masaccio or of Leonardo. But all this happens so slowly and evolves so discreetly and delicately, subordinated to the unity and constancy of so firm and powerful a personality, that there is scarcely any transition apparent at all from one picture to another to the person who passes, step by step, through the stupendous gallery that spans the greatest of all epochs of art, although such a transition is evident and is measured by an immense distance, to the one who passes from seeing the *Marriage of the Virgin* to admire the *School of Athens*, or from admiring the *School of Athens* to go into ecstasy over the culminating and marvelous *Transfiguration*.

This equal, sustained kind of progress which in dealing with a Raphael gives us the impression of serenity and of the



infallible precision of planetary motion, more frequently accompanies or is the attribute of lesser conditions than genius. The critical acumen of Villemain was similarly guided and carried, as if by a gentle downward slope, to the ideas that were brought in with the new era, without his being aware of anything until finally he found himself at a considerable distance from his point of departure. He is like those hamlets, situated on shifting mountain sides, built quite near the summit, which one day appear in the valley.

But this disposition to change and enlarge one's thought or style is usually developed in a less continuous and more perceptible manner by means of transitions which mark with precision the successive points at which each tendency originates and then departs from the one which preceded it, just like lines which form an angle. It is thus the case of Murillo, whose immense work is divided into three styles so different, so finely characterized, that the first dominates the pictures painted during his youth for the fairs at Cadiz; the second, those canvases which he painted after studying the collections of the Escorial; and the third, the marvellous works of the period of the *Immaculate Conception* and *St. Anthony*. An analogous diversity appears in the works of composers like Gluck; he was persuaded by the full possession of his strength to pass from the sentimentality and vagueness of his early operas, to the dramatic vigor with which he expressed Alceste's self-denial and Iphigeneia's grief. And the protean, unappeasable spirit of Verdi offers even a better example of this—he passes with a magician's skill from the style of *Hernani* to that of *Il Trovatore* or *Rigoletto*; from *Rigoletto*'s to *Don Carlos*'; and not content with stamping *Aïda* with originalities, unforeseen and unexpected from a man at the end of his artistic life, he colors the last brilliant rays of his

robust old-age with a new, surprising transformation—*Othello* and *Falstaff*.

George Sand might well be a representative of a progressive, flexible career. She is a Thisbe endowed with the gift of rejuvenating everything she breathed upon. She was just as much a rejuvenator of herself in regard to style and forms of art—she created the feverish passions and the strange complexity of *Lélia's* soul and the rebellious cry of *Indiana* and *Valentine*, the idyllic candor of *La Mare au Diable* and *La petite Fadette*. Sainte-Beuve could justly be placed next to her. The imposing pile of his hundred volumes contain buried in their depths no less than five souls of the author, one succeeding and dethroning another, just as archæologists have discovered on the site of Troy five superimposed cities, one erected upon the ruins of the other.

These changes constitute a superiority when they take root and merge into a unity in a firm personality that is the master of itself. This is not so, however, if they show only an easy, undetermined adaptability, marked by the absence of definite characteristics and a voluntary choice. Changes in one's work must not impair the integrity of the personality. They should, on the contrary, reveal the personality in a process of reincarnation which is due to its insatiable aptitude for observation and adaptation, which is the artist's as well as the scholar's most precious gift: the gift whose essence is revealed in Gay-Lussac's last words, the most sublime and most noble which have expressed one of the reasons for the sadness of death. "*What a pity to have to leave now! This was beginning to be interesting . . .*," said the sage, alluding to the world's progress, and shortly after saying it he died.

When an author, who has led and personified a certain

tendency in thought or art and has gained glory under its banner, watches from his dusk the dawn of new ideas which announce the future, he usually regards them with envy and displeasure and becomes even more firmly intrenched in his own style or his own theories. He carries them to extremes as if he could defend them by means of this false strength. But it sometimes happens, either because of a conscious, generous capacity for sympathy, or, more frequently, because of the fear of losing the flattery of fame, or, even more frequently, because of the involuntary and unconscious absorption of ideas that float in the air, that the master whose star is waning inclines his forehead so that the splendor of the new dawn comes to illuminate it. It would be interesting to pause and give a detailed account of an influence of this sort in the later works of Victor Hugo. His vast production is a spectacular display of a hundred forces which radiate as many different lights of inspiration and art. One can see, for example, how the rough and violent feeling for reality which characterized the new literary trend at the close of the last century dominates the tone of *Chansons des rues et des bois* and how the fervid idealism of the poet with the humanitarian vision is attenuated by a trace of bitter pessimism in the final poems of *Le Pape* and *L'Ane*.

A constant will in an artist does not imply a necessity for uninterrupted and insatiable production. Intervals of silence and contemplation are often more efficacious for renovation and the progressive development of one's work than restless activity. They are intervals during which the artist gathers inner forces in preparation for a transfiguration of his spirit which will be manifested in a new work when he breaks the chrysalis into which he has retired. This is not the melancholy repose of a twilight, the precursor of shadow and sad night—it is an Olympian repose at mid-day. It is the hushed quiet

of the fields overcome by the sun's heat, when antiquity watches the placid sleep and the deep breathing of Pan, when even the wind, imitating him, softens its breezes, when the plowman, wearied with the morning's work, lies down to rest.

§ 63. *An excess of love that paralyzes aptitude*

A fanatical love for an art or a science can create in the heart of those who feel it extremes of superstitious veneration which repress the impulse of the will, by which that love might become active and fertile; and in this way they can be counted, although it seems paradoxical, among the causes which contribute to the failure of a vocation.

Their soul suspended between the sublimity of the idea which they have formed of their adored object, and their lack of confidence in themselves, they repress with a tremulous fear the temptation to touch the material which they must use for their work. I believe that the most faithful, the most refined and the most impartial admirers of Beauty in this world are to be found among that anonymous and timid legion: that legion composed of those who bear within their soul, from the dawn of reason to the dusk of life, the tenderest predilection for an art which they adore in the works of others, without perhaps ever having dared, even in intimacy or in secret, to draw the veil which conceals the mysteries of initiation, although inner voices often confided to their soul that there was their direction and goal.

Who knows what particular kind of voluptuousness, what mystic voluptuousness lies beneath the shadow of this seemingly chaste modesty, so full of love? Who knows how much ineffable sweetness and delicate fragrance the flower of ideality and beauty holds for those souls alone, a flower never withered for them by the lust for fame or the jealousy of another's glory? . . .

At other times the superstitious respect which rises from excessive love leads, not to abstinence from the work, but to a desire to attain a sublime perfection in it, a desire which restrains the soul's frank impulse of creative energy, and perhaps, because of the impossibility of achieving its hopeless purpose, destroys the vocation.

All those artists who, like Callimachus of ancient times, like Tasso and like Flaubert, have sought the desired perfection with delirious anguish, have doubtless sometimes found themselves on the brink of an utter mortal dejection. How many heroic reactions of the will, how evocative a thaumaturgy would be necessary to raise, like Lazarus dead a hundred times of despair and fatigue, those innumerable persons from their despondency! Is not the fever for unattainable perfection the clue to the folly of that old sculptor Apollodorus? The story is told of him that after he finished a statue he did not waste a moment in shattering it with his hammer. And does not the same thing explain why in Leonardo's divine "work," the things which he dreamed more beautiful than he had been able to realize in the span and activity of a lifetime remained always unfinished and abandoned by his hand? . . .

§ 64. *The dream of perfection and the executing will. Two lineages of artists.* Luca, fa presto!

. . . And, yet, alas for him whose veins have not a drop of this stupefying potion! . . . In a small dose, it does not inhibit nor bewitch but lends a divine rhythm and perseverance to the indomitable energies. To imagine what is perfect and to force one's self into heroic action in order to obtain a ray of its light, but not to flatter this contemplative love with the hope of possessing it—for it is like loving a star in the heavens; to nourish the dream of perfection, limiting it by

the experience and knowledge of one's own powers in order to know just how far the pressure to which we submit them has exhausted their strength, for after that all persistence will be in vain; and once this moment has arrived, to quit the mocking and malignant demons that move in a garrulous flock in the imagination, deriding what we have done and exciting us to destroy or abandon it; to burn, at such a moment, the ships of the executing will, and to be obliged to complete our work and to admit it as our own before our conscience and before others, as one admits and recognizes one's own child regardless of his worth . . . This is how the dream of perfection can be reconciled with a resolute and fertile activity.

But without that mysterious dream one can never produce a lasting work. If it prevented many of Leonardo's thoughts from breaking their chrysalis, upon those thoughts which did take form his dreamed-of perfection leaves its stamp and crowns the formidable struggle of the genius wrestling with his indomitable material. And what a conception of perfection was his! Vasari in relating the story of *La Gioconda* writes these words, which can freeze the blood in the veins of him who recalls them as he looks at the picture and grasps the tremendous difficulty of the achievement: "*E quattro anni penatovi, lo lascio imperfetto!*" . . .

All the perseverance and fervor of the most devoted artist can be consumed in two or three works, as well as in many, and still not have enough time to finish them. The *Nulla dies sine linea* may refer to the line which is retouched or substituted as well as to an entirely new one. Beside the noble lineage of artists, never very large in number, for whom perfection is a *sweet enemy*, there appear other facile, inexhaustible and vigorous ones; some impartially and liberally scatter beauty with their right hand, with their left, triviality,

accumulating with both of them such an uneven and vast work as that of Tintoretto's in the field of painting, or Donizetti's in music, or Lope de Vega's in poetry. But not always is the greatest evidence of strength in him who produces most. There is doubtless a greater amount of energy devoted to art represented in the life of a Flaubert, who remains shut up in his retreat like a solitary recluse, to leave a few novels as a fruit of all his titanic force, than there is in the life of a Lope, open to all the winds of action and pleasure and throwing to the world, in the intervals between love-making and brawls, such a fertile inventiveness that if his works were divided amongst twenty authors, each one would be considered prodigious.

In mediums which are inhospitable and premature to art all kinds of perseverance of the artistic will are costly—costly is that one which is manifested by a production without flaws or failures; that one which pursues the desired perfection is even more so, for it takes on the semblance of heroism. But only heroism can remake the reality that surrounds it and adapt it to itself; heroism is a necessity; heroism is an urgent duty in him who aspires to a hero's laurels. If art is some day to scale the heights we have set for it, it will not be simply by means of the development of civilization or the maturity of the collective soul: it must be with the anticipated work, unhindered by popular taste, of heroic souls.

There was a famous painter whose real name was Giordano, but who was usually known as *Luca, fa presto*. When he was a boy, he was confined to the workshop by his father, who had to barter his son's art for daily bread, and poor Giordano had to paint hurriedly. Scarcely had he yielded to his divine instinct, becoming rapt in a figure or a line which inspired him to beauty, when the voice of his father quick-

ened his too fastidious hand. "*Luca, fa presto!*" he would say; and the passersby heard the inexorable watchword at all hours, so they nicknamed the harassed painter *Luca, fa presto*, by which he is known to posterity. There are countries where Giordano's father is a representative entity, a personification, an eponymous hero; he is that harmony of the will that forms the environment.

The necessity of suddenly returning to the reality of combat or of work, for in these lands artistic production is still not an occupation, but a diversion and a dream; or the subordination of the pen, which pursues beauty only by accident, to the feverish impulses of passion; the lack of schooling, method, or discipline; the lack of appreciation of what is exquisite and perfect in a culture not highly polished; the indolent lenity of criticism; alternatives of passivity or rapture which in mental labor, as in any other kind of activity, evince the manner and rhythm of the character of a race; an absurd credit for extemporaneity;—all these are influences which arise from the conditions of a social order, and are summed up in a great voice which cries out in the soul of him who holds the instrument with which to create art or poetry: *Luca, fa presto!*

§ 65. *Collaboration. Cases where it is justified. Friendship in art and science*

Coöperation, study in common, the discipline of a liberal authority, the stimuli and sympathies of a cenacle, confidences that share with all the results of the observations of each one—all help to guide the vocation that is seeking orientation. But a combination of efforts which may surpass the rivalry of method or of school, and which may intend to



participate in the very creation of the work, will rarely prove an adequate means for directing and orienting the uncertain aptitude.

There are, nevertheless, personal arrangements bound by agreements so profound and harmonized by affinities so intimate, that they not only can share among themselves, without any sacrifice of that *quid ineffabile* of personality, the mysterious creative action, from whence come the impulse and the breath which give birth to a living work, but this whole action is perhaps for them a necessary condition of all efficacious effort. Vocation is then like a single *call* which two souls hear simultaneously and whose aim and purpose can only be accomplished between the two.

Thus we can explain the cases of the indissoluble literary or artistic comradeship which unites two names, two persons, in a single reputation, in a single *personality* in the history of Art and Literature; true *pre-established harmony*; fraternity comparable to that of the names immortally united by tradition in the legends of heroic fellowship: Hercules and Yolaos, Patroclus and Achilles, Teseus and Piritoos, Pilades and Orestes, Diomedes and Stenelus.

Frequently the spiritual brotherhood of collaborators is based on actual brotherhood, and Nature's bond inspires the affection, unblemished by selfishness or jealousy, which is necessary to share so dear a treasure as the fame of an artist. This bond is also manifested in the concord of spirit which makes the mutual work easy and spontaneous. The Boot brothers, in XVIIIth century Flemish painting; the Estrada brothers, in the Spanish painting of the same century; the Bach brothers: John Ambrose and John Christopher (the latter, if not in the exact act of collaboration, through an affectionate love and an extraordinary resemblance, which included an almost absolute similarity from their external ap-

pearance to the style of their music); Paul and Victor Marguerite, in contemporary French literature, shared notoriety like an indivisible inheritance. But who has not already thought of even more glorious and characteristic names than those which can corroborate this interesting psychological phenomena: Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, the Menechmi of the pen, bound by the candid, tenderest fraternity of children who played the divine game of Art together under the paternal roof? . . . Sometimes, artists become brothers only through choice: like Pollidorus of Caravaggio and Maturin of Florence, who at the time of Raphael, divided the honor and profit of pictures they had painted together. These examples the whole world will recognize: Erckmann and Chatrian; Meilhac and Halévy.

It may happen that each collaborator has about the same faculties, that neither one has a quality which is lacking in the other. The efficiency of the collaboration is then explained by the greater concurrences of homogeneous forces in the act of producing; by the greater quantity and intensity of energy applied to the work. This was true with the Goncourts; each one would write a page on the same subject and when they compared both versions they scarcely noticed more than casual differences, so that by correcting one with the other they obtained the most exact, full and polished expression of a single idea. After Jules died, Edmond continued writing and his own works are not distinguishable, by any added excellency or any essential defect, from those he composed with his brother. The books of the de Goncourts are the literary counterpoint of that statue of Apollo, of which the ancients left a record. It was the work of two sculptor friends: Telechles and Theodore, who, after agreeing on the proportions of the statue, separated—one for Samos, the other for Ephesus, one to make the upper half, and the other the lower.

After it was finished, they put it together so carefully that a single artisan could not have made it more harmonious.

But the virtue of collaboration can also lie within the fundamental unity without which participation in the work would be impossible in the concurrence of a certain opportune and fortunate variety of aptitudes in the two associates. Each one of the collaborators contributes that which the other can not give and thus they unite, for the harmony and perfection of their common work, forces which, if separated, would yield only a discordant or incomplete creation. The pictures of the *Boths* were painted in this manner. John possessed a knowledge of landscape; Andrew, that of the human form; and while one contributed the background of the picture, the other drew the figures.

It is interesting to see how the instinctive and fatal force which brings together two spirits who think themselves complementary may end at times in enmity and even envy. They separate in anger and they stop work; but soon they unite again to execute the work that will only provoke new jealousies and disputes. So I image Agostino and Annibale Carracci, on a background half primitive, half refined, of that picturesque life that was lived by the artists of XVIth century Italy; thus I visualize them: always quarreling, having quareled from the time they sat in the lap of their mother, like Jacob and Esau from the womb of Rebecca; burning in silent rancor and in ignoble envy; and yet, in spite of this, seeking each other after each fit of anger, necessarily irresistible to each other, now to ask each other for inspiration or counsel, now to apply their brushes to a common work—their famous frescoes in the Farnese Palace.

If constant collaboration is comparatively rare, friendship rooted in the field of Art or Science, and showing itself in the intellectual comradeship of two spirits, is constant every-

where. Without adhering to collaboration, at least as an habitual and persistent procedure, they exchange between themselves influence, stimuli and suggestions, in a way fruitful for them and for the art they are cultivating. This predestined friendship awakens in one of the two friends the first impulse of vocation by the stimulating virtue of example; or, rather, it reforms and balances, now through reciprocal, now through unilateral influence, the temper of the production of one or of both of them; or, finally, it unites them in the same action and a single purpose to which each one contributes his personal works which may perhaps be dissimilar from those of the other in nature, but which harmonize with them in their objective. Thus his friendship with Coleridge revealed to Wordsworth his vocation; and the friendship of Southey was, for this same Coleridge, a center of inspiration and his intellectual font, as was that of Alfieri for Foscolo. A glorious friendship, which joined the autonomous forces of two friends, is that one which united Boscan and Garcilaso and made possible the Spanish literary Renaissance.

Scientific investigation offers as favorable a field as Art for this suggestion of friendship. Geoffrey de Saint-Hilaire discovers the genius of Cuvier and from that point they proceed to unite their efforts for a while, and they even come to collaborate in some monographs. Finally the originality of each one conquered, and they separated only to end in the famous polemic which constitutes one of the most memorable episodes in the history of ideas during the past century.

The more efficient and fruitful these spiritual bonds are, the greater the dissimilarity there is between the aptitudes and the inclinations of those who are united by them, as long as such differences can be reduced to a superior concord and unity in the definite objective toward which the activity of both tends. Goethe expressed it, referring to his friend-

ship with Schiller, when he said that the efficacy of their union consisted in the fact that *they both were of very contrary temperament but they aimed at a single end*. And this famous friendship of Schiller and Goethe is the best and clearest example of it. Endowed by nature with the most diverse faculties and tendencies within the same art and with the same lofty cultural aspirations, one is passionate, the other Olympic; the creator of *Don Carlos*, an idealist, that of *Wilhelm Meister*, a realist; the glorifier of the Revolution, a democrat, the counselor of Charles Augustus, an aristocrat; the author of *Naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, a Kantian, the reader of Spinoza, a pantheist; they begin by looking at each other with jealousy and displeasure and when they finally come to know each other better, having overcome these differences, the friendship which binds them is for each one of them the most adequate and fertile initiation for the tuning of his thought and character. Each one is both teacher and pupil; and between the two, they build for posterity the arch of this alliance in their satiric attacks in *Die Horen* and in their collaboration in *Xenien*, until Schiller's death when his memory continues hovering like a spirit over Goethe, who consecrates it in a sublime song of praise and relates it with everything that he afterwards thinks or produces.

Another lofty example of antagonistic and complementary spirits, happily united in a great ideal work is that of Luther and Melanchthon. Luther's vehement and impetuous force had to have near it a sympathetic disposition, a persuasive grace and unimpassioned reflection, which were unknown to him. He found Melanchthon, and those two spirits were joined by a bond as indestructible as those which attract the planets. They were like the two wings of an archangel. Or better, they were like the two wheels of a mill: the fly-wheel in perpetual rotation, and the nether mill-stone, steady and

sure, which was necessary for grinding the grain with which the new bread of souls would be kneaded.

§ 66. *Passing from one vocation to another. From action to contemplation; the great historians. From contemplation to action*

An interesting object of study would be the passing from one vocation to another, a fact which is not forcibly prevented, either by an aptitude tested in the first vocation, nor by honor and profit gained in it, nor by the authority with which a certain kind of activity practised for a long time tends to fix associations and habits. And it sometimes occurs that this change of activities comes as a natural development in which the new vocation seems to be born from the entrails of the other, to control and to augment the riches that the latter has accumulated.

The transition from *Martha* to *Mary*, from an active to a contemplative life, is frequent at the end of life that began by being consecrated to the arts of the will, even if we exclude the cases of a frustrated or premature interruption of the first aptitude (to which I referred when I spoke of the child who played with a crystal glass). In many of the spirits endowed both with heroic courage or the gift for governing, and with the virtue of literary expression, this virtue is not manifested simultaneously with the gifts, but after they have completed the orbit of their activity. Such a succession of aptitudes is seen particularly in the lives of the great historians. The noted historian is apt to be a man of action who, at the peak of life, devotes himself to coining his knowledge of the world in the die of a literary superiority which he only discovers, or only then cultivates as it deserves. It would be easy to cite examples among the classic historians. There was Thucydides, who does not choose his vocation as a narrator

until the loss of Amphipolis marks the end of his public career; and Tacitus, who takes the stylus and wax-tablets of Clio after he had removed the consular robe from his shoulders, under the despotism of Domitian; and Polybius, who writes his *History* in the exile to which he was confined by Paulus Aemilius. After the decline of intellectual culture, historical narration is reborn in the Occident, in the arms of political experience. When the Goths of Vitiges are conquered by the arms of Belisarius, who, although he was a great statesman, could not succeed in preventing the fall of that ephemeral empire, retires to the convent at Viviers and, besides other intellectual works, undertakes the task of narrating the deeds of the kings whose inspirer he has been for half a century. Many of the chroniclers who precede the reincarnation of great classic history were veterans in politics and war. Joinville, a fellow soldier of Saint Louis, had enlarged his patrimonial lands with the reward of his military exploits, where in the tranquillity of his last days, he dedicated himself to relating his recollections in the delightful epic candor of his chronicles. . . . When don Juan II of Castile discharges the hidalgo, Fernán Pérez de Guzmán, from his confidence, his former favorite shuts himself up in his estate at Batres and writes the richest and most penetrative historical prose of the XVth century. This observation would still be better substantiated if we were to mention a few historians of the Renaissance. Guicciardini turns his eyes to the past while he rests from the worries of governmental affairs and war, in his *Tusculum* at Aratri; Hurtado de Mendoza when the ingratitude and mistrust of Philip II make him retire to his home at Granada, after a most glorious diplomatic and political career; Brantome, finding himself once again in his dominions at Dordogne, after many adventures in the wars and at the court; don Francisco de Melo, the Portuguese Tacitus, when

his loss of favor and his imprisonment oblige him to exchange for books the sword that he had wielded in the campaigns in Flanders and Catalonia. Later on, the calm disillusion of Saint-Simon, after a rather hectic life at court, left for posterity the superb touches of his *Mémoires*. The historian who knows of the world only through the documents that he takes from dusty archives is a type that is more frequent in recent times. But still there are quite a few among those of the last century who come to us from the field of action. There is Grote, for instance, who exchanges, at the end of his youth, the storms in Parliament for the serene contemplation of the past; or Guizot, whose historic writings were discontinued during twenty years of illustrious political activity, and who finally enters his true field after the dethronement of Louis Philippe prevents his counsellor from participating in real, living history. Finally there is Niebuhr, who leaves his embassy at Rome and lives for the rest of his days in the university atmosphere at Bonn, in order to happily fulfill a youthful idea of his by writing the great work which has perpetuated his name.

Sometimes poetic inspiration is the flower that blooms in the twilight of an active life, thanks to the voluptuous or melancholy stimuli of leisure and memory. So it was revealed to Silius Italicus as he wandered among the marble statues in his retreat at Parthenope. And an interest in philosophic speculation as an inducement to abandon the world was awakened in Destutt de Tracy after he had dedicated to military and political affairs his youth and part of his later life.

It was a theory of Saint-Simon, not the noted author of the *Mémoires*, but the Utopian, that the doctrines of the thinker who aspired to innovate social and moral ideas should never be crystallized or expounded until old-age, after a long



period of varied and energetic action which should have direct contacts with the most diverse and hidden realities, an *experimental* period, which should furnish the spirit with food for future thought. He himself adjusted his glamorous life to this idea of the perfect reformer; rather adjusted the idea, *a posteriori*, to the kind of existence that he had to live. There is in this, at any rate, a basis of truth which proves how logical and opportune can be the transformation which converts a man of action into a man of contemplation.

The opposite transition, from science or art to a life of action, is a change often registered when great revolutions and wars follow long periods of peace. Essentially active people, whom a quiet environment keeps ignorant of their true vocation or who are without the means to satisfy it, remain chained to another, worth while perhaps, but less profound and congenial than the one which silently awaits its time. At that supreme moment the heroic will may show glimpses of itself, through an arm accustomed only to hold a pen, a compass, a brush or a chisel. The tradition of the wars of the Middle Ages, in the Italy of Guelphs and Ghibellines, offers the name of John of Procida, who, already famous as a physician, one day feels the wrongs of his Sicilian countrymen seething in his breast. He goes from court to court, seeking a prince to avenge the French conquests, and he breathes hate and hope into the heart of his people, until he seems to be the arrogant personification of revenge, illuminated by the sinister light of the tragic *Vespers*. When the hurricane of the Revolution blows from France over all Europe, its blasts snatch Kleber from his peaceful tasks as an architect and makes of him, at the end of a few years, the conqueror of Heliopolis and reconqueror of Egypt; and entering the study where Gouvion de Saint-Cyr was painting, they move him to

take up the sword which will, in the near future, become the staff of the marshal of the Empire.

§ 67. *From art to science; from science to art; from art to literature; from one art to another; from creation to criticism; from science to religious faith*

The passing from the realm of an art to that of a science is another type of substitution of vocations. Sometimes the transition is made in such a way that it is possible to follow the gradual steps by which one activity replaces the other. Herschel was a musician and in pursuit of this inherited vocation (for he was the son and brother of musicians) he desired a fundamental understanding of the art, so he delved into the theory of harmony. The study of harmony turned his attention to pure mathematics which then led him to that relation of numbers and lines which constitutes the science of celestial bodies. Here he felt that his deepest and most natural aptitude lay; and from that instant he left the music which is translated into sounds for that other ineffable and supreme music which the philosopher of Samos heard in his contemplation of the heavens.

From this same field of music to that of medical science, came Razi, the famous luminary of Arabic wisdom. Morse gained well-deserved fame as a painter, but when he divined a path better suited to his faculties, he took it and arrived at the invention of the telegraph, an achievement which obscures his artistic efforts in the minds of posterity. From painting to science, have come also Pirron, the sceptic, Delande, the naturalist, Lahire, the mathematician, and Fulton, the inventor. The transition from writing to science offers such names as those of Cabanis and Claude Bernard: the

former aspired to fame as a poet and a humanist, the latter to fame as a dramatist, before they found their place in biology. Mascheroni, the poet, became a famous mathematician after reaching discreet maturity, while Raynouard was a dramatist before he turned his attention to philology. And many more illustrations could be added if we were to include as provisional vocations those transient, impatient manifestations of activity in souls at the dawn of adolescence. Great is the enchantment by which you captivate, O beauty expressed in words! and there is no gifted individual who has not offered you his first love.

Even the less-frequent reciprocal transition from science to art does not fail to bring to mind some famous names. From the laboratory where Reber was studying the industrial application of experimental sciences, he heard the voice which brought him forever to musical art. Perrault was an eminent doctor until a copy of Vitruvius which fell into his hands lured him into a new vocation, and Perrault became the great architect of the age of Louis XIV, without ever forgetting his first aptitude although he relegated it to a second place in his attention and glory.

A powerful literary turn has taken from art such men as Thackeray, Gautier and Meilhac; all of them were familiar with the drawing-pencil or the brush before the pen. The transition from one plastic art to another also presents numerous examples: Brunelleschi, originally a sculptor, became later an illustrious architect; this case repeats itself in Palladius; Bramante drifted from painting to architecture; Ghirlandajo, in whom the skillful goldsmith is followed by the eximious painter, as in Verocchio the goldsmith preceded the sculptor. Blanchet was consecrated to the chiseling of marble rather than to the coloring of canvas, an opposite course from that

followed by our contemporary Bartholdi whose talent renounced its love for painting to marry statuary.

Another kind of evolution occurs in the person who, within the bounds of the same art, passes from the productive to the critical. Perhaps there is not in all literature an example of a superior intellectual and critical mind who has not arrived at his ultimate vocation by this road, although in innumerable cases the productive faculty persists even afterwards, even if it yields the first place to analysis and judgment. Somewhat less common in the plastic than in the literary arts because the critic is generically a writer, there are, nevertheless, some instances of such a derivation of artistic aptitude: Ceán Bermúdez, after yielding in his youth to the *anch'io* of Corregio, devoted himself to the theory and history of the beauty which he had dreamed of realizing; Delecluze, the painter upon whom fame had smiled, later preferred to seek a different kind of fame in the judgment of others' work. Delacroix, on the other hand, began in the art which his brushes were to illumine by writing criticisms on art.

A frequent cause of spiritual transformation is the one which influences the scientist who, either because he despairs or is deceived by the fatal limitation and the slow acquisition of the truth within the reach of positive knowledge, or because an emotional episode in his life puts him face to face with that Sphinx which questions us about the mystery of whence we come and whither we go, discards his instruments and abandons himself to the pursuit of the idea of an absolute truth with the inspiration of mysticism or faith: a conversion that is almost always bold, hectic and wasteful but sometimes sublime. Sublime it is, of course, in Pascal, the prodigious geometrician, who while still in his infancy grasps by his own speculation, without books or teachers, the whole

science of Euclid, even develops and applies it in his youth, offering a perfect example of one of the finest scientific minds, until Jansenius' word and the accident which endangered his life while crossing the bridge of Neuilly touched the very depths of his heart with such an obsession of infinite mystery—he never afterwards forsakes this kind of meditation. He suffers in it with such nostalgic anguish, with such shudderings of terror, with such a sad despair, with such pious consecration, that not since his time has human eloquence found terms to express such a thing.

Doubtless, Swedenborg sold his scientific career for a lower price. His aptitude for the observation of nature was extraordinary, and it reached originality and invention along more than one line, when the phantom of a revealed truth that appears to the mind's eye led him from his path, enveloping him for the rest of his life in the theosophical mists of that *New Jerusalem* which still has its adepts. Likewise, Stenon, the great Danish anatomist, whose name is associated with that of parotid glands, interrupted in the full flower of his genius his fruitful investigations, not to preach a new faith, like Swedenborg, but to embrace the old one and consecrate himself to it absolutely. Even more frequently perhaps does this deceitful influence reach those who have followed a dream of beauty. We have as examples Botticelli taken away from art by the fiery utterances of Savonarola; and Theodore Kamphuizen torn from his studio by the theological controversies of his age. But the captivity to which this divine seduction condemns the artist's faculties fortunately does not often succeed in completely annulling all of his aptitudes but rather allows it to exist as a subordinate vocation, making it concrete and binding it to the object which has taken its preëminence away from it. Such is the case of Fra Bartolommeo who, Vasari tells us, wanted to forget painting after he

had donned the holy garb. Later he returned to it as an instrument of piety but limited himself to the painting of sacred subjects. The modern case of Tolstoi is no different. He abandons and renounces his great work as a novelist when he is converted to evangelic mysticism but he retained his pen as a means of propaganda and edification. In this way he allows the spontaneous outburst of his reason to show its worth in signs of a beauty as effective as it is unpremeditated.

§ 68. *Disdain or indifference for the aptitude one has. Disproportion between the vocation and the aptitude*

The abandonment of a certain kind of activity which may correspond to a true, natural disposition, frequently arises from the fact that the aptitude was never accompanied and utilized by a vocation as energetic and faithful as it merited. It is not unusual for a person who possesses a superior ability and realizes it, instead of cherishing and honoring it, thankful for Nature's gift, to repay this good fortune with indifference and disdain.

Even those who develop, and, consequently exercise their true aptitude, show little appreciation for their gift and devote more attention to an inferior aptitude which they may happen to possess. Rumor has it that the moderate regard which Stendhal had for his late, neglected literary vocation, contrasted directly with the vehemence of his dreams and longing to be a man of action, fascinated as he was by the dazzling personality of Bonaparte. Horace Walpole, who professed or pretended to profess a similar unpleasant *non curanza* for his own literary name, reserved his vain pride for his superficial position of a politician and man of the world. Posterity when it recognizes and honors the famous experi-

menter in Priestley does not suspect that this aptitude was only a hobby for his leisure hours and that the great vehemence and persevering activity of his vocation were consumed in theological arguments, which have left no more trace than smoke. On a higher plane—is not the *Discurso de las armas y las letras* an indication of the choice and respect of Cervantes? Cervantes preferred and respected most not his vocation for his fictional creations (although he showed love for it and took pride in it) but that other never fully realized vocation which moved him in his youth to seek military glory; he even went so far in this as to fall captive after he had lost the companion hand of the one which was to write *Don Quixote* in fighting in the most memorable battle which the past and present have seen and the future can ever hope to see.

The innocent and frank disregard for a wonderful gift, like that of a child who carelessly plays with a diamond which he has found on the floor, can be seen in Fray Luis de León, who never had the thought of publishing his poems; in his old age at the insistence of a friend he copied them with the famous words: *These little works fell out of my hands*. . . . But no one offers an example of so great a disproportion between the supreme greatness of the faculty and the disdainful indifference for the vocation as Shakespeare. That excitable boy, prodigious son of a bourgeois family, was an insatiable adventurer married before his time to save the honor of a woman older than himself, a heavy drinker and a poacher. He began to write for the theater through the suggestion of his fortuitous position as a low comedian; with utter disregard and neglect for art and fame, he produced gems whose worth he certainly never suspected. Then, hardly having reaped the benefits of his good luck, he retired to a village, although in the full flower of his genius, as any common man who gives

his brain a rest after he had passed the fertile vehemence of youth. In the village he lived the life of a judicious land-owner, exercising public duties, administering his fortune and loaning money at interest without ever again showing the least trace of his poetic genius, or the least interest in the success of his works, which were scattered and in danger of being lost in forgotten manuscripts, or the most insignificant affection for the ideal creatures to whom he had given perpetual life and fame. This is a curiosity that suggests to us the idea of a change of personality, similar to that of a hypnotized person who comes to and retains no impression or remembrance of what he has said or done while he was controlled by another's will; in Shakespeare's case we attribute this change to a supernatural influence, the obsession of genius. In view of this disinterestedness of Shakespeare, it is not absurd to presume that if the fortune which he gained with difficulty had come to him early through inheritance or an accident that would have made his efforts unnecessary, his colossal faculty might have remained asleep in the shadows. Disdain for fame is an easy thing to conceive and it might be considered a flower of wisdom and a noble and exquisite superiority but what seems to be contrary to the laws of Nature is the sterility or premature stagnation of one endowed with such energy and the means of showing it, of the stimulus of production for production's sake, for the necessity of developing and realizing its own strength, the natural impulse of vocation which has been sufficient to keep in solitary contemplation of their work spirits who never tasted worldly fame or another's understanding; sages like Copernicus, poets like André Chénier, and Bécquer, and thinkers like subtle and profound Joubert.

The general contempt to which the ascetic conception of life relegated all the good and superior things of the world



has, without doubt, sacrificed through the ages countless treasures of genius, ability, and energy, suppressed in the depths of the soul by those who possess them, because they consider them vain, empty displays, temptations leading to coldness and detachment from the only idea which they consider worthy of love. Sometimes, what the ascetic of genius sacrifices is not, fortunately, the aptitude but only the glory which arises from it; he condemns his name to eternal oblivion but saves the benefit of his genius for mankind, although he manifests it only subordinate to the idea which holds him in somnambulism. The wonderfully inspired artists who came from the monasteries in the Middle Ages and led the multitudes to build with stones those sublime edifices which were a symbol of their faith; and the master organ builders who animated the cavernous naves of the imposing cathedrals with divine voices, preferred their own eternal oblivion to the immortality of their work. The author of the admirable *Imitation of Christ* writes in one of his pages, "O Lord, make my name unknown forever," and as the fulfillment of his aspiration for humility, even today the world does not know his name. But the sentiment which moved him to ask for this has doubtless led many times, not to the renouncement of fame only, but to the repression and sacrifice of aptitudes. One day, the Saint of Assisi tries, for amusement's sake, to chisel a cup and in so doing he discovers an unsuspected aptitude. The cup is wonderfully carved. The chisel produces exquisite marvels, but the will of the saint, jealous of any kind of work, hastens to discard the instrument which had made him conscious of his artistic genius. These inhibitions of religious fervor might be the result of philosophy, of a social organization, of a preoccupation floating in the atmosphere, which rebel against certain forms of activity, or, again, they might be the result of a very lively passion or

interest, for whose realization time takes too much away from an aptitude which one has so that it becomes an object of scorn and oblivion.

Can this absence of love sometimes become hate? Is it possible that deviation from the best gift that we receive from nature may become an abhorrence toward the gift and a passionate outburst against it? . . . Why not, when the instinct of the aptitude rises up and rebels against the unjust confinement, when necessity, the irrepressible desire for expansion which usually is the very essence of aptitude, struggles against the desperate effort that tries to dominate and repress it. . . .

§ 69. *Traces of the first vocation in the one which supplants it*

A first vocation that disappears, whether because the spontaneous impulse from which it was born is extinguished in the soul, or because an external fatality opposes its development with obstacles which force it to make way for another, usually leaves a faint trace upon the vocation which follows it and takes its place.

The first vocation which Nature has perhaps called most intimately and purely her own has not really died; it is only buried and kept in the depths of the soul. And from that vantage point, it succeeds in taking revenge on the non-recognition and oblivion to which it has been condemned, or on the cruel misfortune which has turned the course of life and thus rendered the aptitude fruitless. It revenges itself by penetrating the very essence and by coloring with its own reflection the accomplishments of the new vocation which replaces it.

Thus, in the case of Ignatius de Loyola, the career of the religious organizer who discarded armor for monastic garb shows traces of the soldier.

Thus, in the case of those writers whose literary inclination has not appeared until after a more or less lasting and active tendency to practise another art, there is usually a persistent evidence of the spirit of the latter in the technique and style of their writing. Such is the case of Gautier, a most ardent painter in his youth, who never resigned himself to completely abandoning his painting for writing in which he soon fixed his personality forever. His literature is a constant reproduction of the world of the senses, an enormous and varied canvas, resplendent with all the light, all the color, all the harmonious forms which he could have produced with the most inspired brush. The same transformation is manifested in Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, also painters before they turned to fiction. And then, as writers, they were so masterly in intense and vivid description that they produced the illusion of something actually seen. It is also shown in the case of the idyllic Topffer, whose incomparable descriptions of nature are a glorious effort to obtain through the power of words what his parents had prevented him in his childhood from realizing in colors.

It would be easy to cite many similar examples, all cases of a superior faculty which, not being able to manifest itself in its natural and spontaneous form, reaches its objective under the pretense of an extraneous application. In general if we could know in detail the psychological history of all those artists whose style and manner are characterized by some peculiarity which is related to transferring the method of one art to that of another, I believe that we should find almost always the clue of a first vocation cut short and replaced by another.

§ 70. *Risks and deceptions in changing a vocation*

While an early vocation may cultivate the true aptitude and may not encounter any of the obstacles which confront the virile and judicious spirit, the progressive development of the mind should always continue from it, diversifying it, bettering it, expanding it, complementing it, if possible, with new, different aptitudes. But do not take away from it the predilection and preëminence which it legitimately merits by its priority; for this makes it like an axle in perfect equilibrium around which has been arranged the dispositions and intimate customs of the soul.

A voluntary change from the favorite career of life, a change in which no force of necessity operates, nor even the natural and evolutionary transfer from one vocation to another, nor the sure consciousness of the superior value of the newly discovered aptitude, or of its greater opportunities, is often a mistake and vanity against which we must guard ourselves. All the erroneous causes which conspire to develop false vocations before allowing room for the true one to come to life can also misguide and replace it without reason or improvement. Furthermore, the joy of glory is not different from the other human joys in that it is liable to be touched with the bitterness of satiety and boredom. The possession of one kind of glory may even engender satiety and awaken the desire to exchange it for another kind of unknown, but tempting, prestige. It may be added that, even in those who stand on the heights, the longing for exertion and struggle is a frequent wish, for their triumph whets their appetite as much as their desire to experience the joy did before they ever possessed it. The beginner pupil who envies the hard-won peace of his master does not know that the master, perhaps

with equal intensity, envies his sweet anguishes and the fluctuations of his restless ambition. We may add to the causes of error which help to begin false vocations these others: the false flatteries of material success, the eagerness for popular acclaim, rash and thoughtless imitation, and one can see how easy it is, even when the soul has already found its true path, for it to wander away from it and yield to the temptation of a false summons.

The abandonment of a *personal* vocation for a fictitious one in thinkers and artists who, tired of branches that bear no delicious fruit, the only reward of contemplation, aspire to the kind of triumph which procured for them authority or fortune, happens rather frequently. It was true in the past also, with the apostasies of this same kind of soul and of those who, having won glory in heroic action, having reached a certain age of life or having suffered certain worldly disappointments, forgot nature's gift to them in the sterile shade of the cloister.

Everyone who feels within him the need for a change in the objective of his activity after an application whose success has been confirmed by trials, and for whose fulfillment the road is clear, has to begin by submitting to severe criticism, not only the existence of the new aptitude that he thought he had found in his soul but also the advantages that this expatriation, as it were, of his mind might bring with it for himself and for others.

#### § 71. *Transitory deviations from vocations and their usefulness*

But the abandonment of a true and successful vocation may be nothing more than a transitory deviation, sometimes beneficial, after which the spirit returns with new vigor to

the path which Nature had marked out for it. Take for example Choron, the great musical theorist, who, although well along on the road to his artistic vocation, one day turned his attention to mathematics. For some time he devoted himself to it, independent of the art of sound, and he seemed to be absorbed in it until the first voice, which was the intimate one, recovered its eclipsed power, and Choron, the master of a new, useful knowledge, replaced his interest forever in the theory of music. Again we have Weber, the composer, who, already possessed with musical genius, was impressed in his youth by the invention of the art of the lithograph. He felt the desire to renew his early fancy for drawing, and so devoted himself enthusiastically to perfecting the attempts of Senefelder, showing an able and original talent in it. But he returned later quite definitively, to that other aptitude more lofty and more in harmony with his spirit, which finally glorified him.

The usefulness of these fleeting deviations often consists in broadening, to the advantage of the very vocation which they seemed to have replaced, the field of observation and experience and in furnishing the fundamental aptitude with elements which reënforce and amplify it, as if by a journey of the mind, at the end of which it returns to its native heath with a greater richness and knowledge of the world. It was so with Choron; it is also evident in the life of Schiller, who, after the juvenile period of his dramatic production, of *Don Carlos*, the poet abandoned the theater for a time and applied himself to the study of history. The books which Schiller produced as a historian, although of great value, could not have justified the abandonment of his first and true vocation if it had been forgotten forever. But when he returned to this dwelling of his spirit, his new theater, which began with the trilogy of *Wallenstein*, showed the benefits of that temporary

deviation because history had given to that most noble poet a sense of objectivity and humanness which had been submerged in his juvenile efforts by a flood of tumultuous subjectivity.

§ 72. *The disturbing voice. Buried statues*

And now I wish to voice a sentiment which, in the course of the discussion of human vocations, has come to my heart a hundred times, repeating a question in an undertone chorus from a thousand different places and resounding embittered and grieved. The question is: *And how about us?* . . . And it leaves me with an uneasiness similar to that which I experience when I think of old marble statues which remain buried and unknown forever. . . .

Always the same thought obsesses me, when, by a casual revelation, as when the smiling country of Milo is lighted with beauty, or by a wise excavation, which conjures away the avarice of ruins, civilization recovers a lost or forgotten work of art, a statue, a bas relief, a precious vase, a wall or a column. After the thought of an object, stolen from the kingdom of the shadows for human glory and admiration, I recall those others which still remain hidden amid the dust of past grandeur, in rustic solitude or in a deep prison. There they lie in Attica, in its glorious plains or in its violet-crowned hills; in Olympia and Corinth, rich in hidden treasures; under the waves of the Ionian or the Aegean seas, or rather under the great canopy of Rome or the secular lavas of Naples. Piercing through the crust of the earth and the waters of the sea, my spirit illumines that oriental breast of the Mediterranean where lie sunken the eternal anchors of the rocks upon which the cities of that race who first made beauty man's gift were built. And in a strange, hyperbolic

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figure, land and sea seem to me like an immense tomb of statues—a scattered museum wherein the stones that are the sole vestiges of those gods whom the artists of Athens, Sicione and Pergamus had been sculpturing for six centuries, repose beneath the indifference of that Nature which they once represented and of that Humanity which was theirs. . . .

Fallen gods, gods of marble and bronze overthrown by the wings of time or the attacks of barbarians, made for light and condemned to the shadows of a mysterious realm without majesty or decorum, your image fills my imagination with anguish. From their present sepulchre, perhaps, some of them will rise, in the dazzling completeness of their beauty, intact, saved by some mysterious fate from the misfortunes which conspired for their oblivion. These are the few which man has been able to replace whole upon their pedestals in a completeness not due to any careless restorations; these have perpetuated in the promiscuity of museums the attitude with which they displayed their disdainful sovereignty on foreheads no less serene than their own. . . . The others, broken, mutilated, returned to the caresses of light as if after the vengeful blow of Titans, mocked by superstition, buried in a landslide, bitten by fire, trampled upon by colts in the barbarian invasions, will give posterity an adorable, decapitated body, like that of the Nike of Samotraccia, or like the marvelous torso of Hercules of Belvedere. And their divine incompleteness will make those who are capable of recognizing their beauty feel the sublime kind of pity which was felt by the audience at the plays of Aeschylus or Sophocles as they witnessed the misfortunes of superhuman families. . . .

But the ones that move me most are those which will never be revived—those which will never be awakened either at the call of excavations or of chance, those that sleep eternally in the bowels of the earth, which the point of the spade will



never penetrate, or in the caves of the sea where their secret will never be revealed. These hold a lost beauty, lost forever and denied to our ecstatic contemplation by a hundred heavy veils, but this beauty persists in the integrity of form—(at the same time) lives and has died. . . .

§ 73. *The aptitudes lost in the dark depths of human society.*  
*The negative influence of the social milieu*

The thought of how superior gifts are sacrificed by a blind social fate entered the mind of the English poet in *a country churchyard*, near the humble nameless tombs. This same sad thought strikes me especially when I see the huge crowd passing before my eyes. There are forces capable of an intense dynamism which remain unknown and are forever lost in the dark depths of human society! Is there any thought more deserving of deep and serious attention than this? When our hearts burst forth in jubilant glorification as a hero passes; when we shed tears of admiration and enthusiasm at the marvels of an artist; when in following the speculations of a sublime mind we are engrossed as if in a religious meditation, how rarely do we give a pious or melancholy thought to the very energies which, not themselves responsible and not for the most part conscious of their unjust destiny, pass from life to death as undeveloped and as obscure as they came into the world?

But these gifts are present not only in the masses who lack enlightenment and often bread. Even above this shadowing background, a thousand fatalities bury forever, under a kind of trivial activity (where perhaps the best of the soul presents competency and improvement), noble aptitudes, which might have reproduced and adequately replaced the harmonious whole of those that develop through action. And in the

formless, opaque mass of the crowd there is thus a potentially rich literature, a lofty art, a science full of clarity, and a thousand heroic battles, so that, in Tyndall's famous metaphor, the dramas of Shakespeare are potential in the maternal womb of the primitive nebula.

Each human society, then, brings to light the souls of heroes according as it dreams of them and it needs them for any plan which it is promoting. But one must not think that the same equality exists between the number of those who get into action and those whom the social organism keeps in embryo or mere potentiality. To think so would be to reduce the number of seeds which the wind scatters to those few which fall and take root and develop into plants. The number of seeds which the earth looses is much greater than the number of those which it shelters. The individual's spontaneity struggles to break away from his milieu, and it succeeds in some measure in creating an increase of *heroic* necessities and desires in the multitude which resists it. But never does this effort broaden the field to the extent which would be required for a complete and just distribution of all the personal energies worthy of noble and superior use. In the perennial struggle which determines who will be the *chosen* ones of all those *summoned*—for there is not room for all of them—the greater fitness or greater strength is the determining factor. Superiority triumphs and imposes itself. But this alone does not satisfy justice, for we still fail to account for those who are not among either the *chosen* or the *summoned*, those who can not get to the scene of the fight because they live in such conditions that their state of existence does not allow them to know themselves or to extract the gold from their mine. And, alas! who knows whether sometimes the foremost and best are not among these? . . .

There have been entire generations during which the activ-

ity of human intelligence suffered an eclipse that lasted centuries, without a single flash of lightning from the virtual light of its fantasy, without a single impulse from the static energy in its thought. And in all generations, and in all nations, there is always a sacrifice of some lineage of souls, great in their particular quality, the quality of aptitude which does not find accommodation within the conditions and necessities of the environment, even without considering that other multitudes of souls who, through unjust individual negligence, keep away from those activities which the environment admits and makes propitious.

The stormy passion for adventure and the dreams of ambition that hit Spain, revealing an immense horizon unexpectedly opened by the new world, extricated from the shadow of simple and peaceful tasks and raised to high places in the field of action spirits whose claws would have otherwise become blunt, in compulsory quietude—farmers like Balboa, students like Cortes, shepherds like Pizarro. . . . The magnetism of the Revolution of '89 awakened in the souls of obscure lawyers and simple rhetoricians the inspiration for military heroism, the genius of political eloquence; and it brought forth from among modest officers the *condottiere* Taine, capable of changing himself on the slope of human destiny into the thunder of war and the arbitrator for the world.—Have you never thought what would have become of the genius of a Rembrandt or a Velazquez if they had been born somewhere in Islam where the graphic representation of living things is forbidden? . . .

As sad as this absolute ignorance or passivity of the aptitude, due to the unpropitious environment in which it lies submerged, is the minimizing of its activity when it has already been directed toward its proper objective, but is belittled and deformed by the narrow limits which confine it.

The story goes that when Cæsar's army was passing through a village in the Alps the Romans were amazed to see how in that small humble place, insignificant government positions caused as many disputes and petty competition as office-seeking did in the great city whose domain was the whole world. Ambition for power, for proselytism and for fame on a small scale, puts into play as much energy of the passion and the will as that which appears in the most solemn of human struggles. In the former one can waste, without knowing it or gaining any glory by it, as lofty a gift as that which is spent in achieving an outstanding success that wins the respect of the world and the veneration of posterity. Such is the characteristic interest in Stendhal's Julien Sorel of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, wherein a spirit that shows a superior instinct for action has for its background the society of a miserable little town.

Environment, through the multiple forms of its negative influence: the incapacity to cultivate and furnish a field for a definite kind of aptitude, the abandonment of an aptitude through ignorance or poverty, the forced adaptation to a certain kind of activity which tends to become a fictitious activity—buries in the shadows, one may suppose, a greater store of superior dispositions than it brings to light and stimulates.

§ 74. *The struggle between the individual aptitude and the resistance of environment*

Few aspects of the history of the human spirit are as profoundly interesting as that of the genial aptitude which fights to the bitter end for society to recognize and honor its superiority. When this contest is prolonged and the select mind is accompanied by a just, heroic spirit, the inspiration of the stimulating satirist arises; and he begins to lash the drowsy

beast who does not heed him. When the will of a misunderstood person is weak or ill, his solitude and retirement develop into a depression that takes the form of satire, of a satire that becomes more bitter when it is not accompanied by a final and paradoxical optimism characteristic of one who employs mockery and sarcasm as a means of action which he believes to be effective.

This is the kind of pessimism that Larra represents better than anyone else. He had a talent, not far from genius, but a vitiated and sorrowful will. His unlucky star placed him in a social milieu in which the proposal of ideas was like a vain soliloquy that he compared to the sorrows of him "who seeks a voice without finding it in a frightful, violent nightmare." What an unspeakable basic bitterness there is beneath the nervous satire of those pages in which *Figaro* treated the decadence of the Spain of his time, from several different angles; the limitations of its horizons, its intellectual stupor and the invariable, tedious rhythm of its life. His personality as a writer needed the huge stage, the electrified atmosphere of the society which inspires and stimulates Schlegel's thoughts in the great days at Weimar; it needed the rostrum from which everyone heard the speeches of Villemain, where Balzac writes and Hugo sings; and the vibrant page of the review which spreads Macaulay's words to the four winds of the literary world. . . . And the incomparable criticisms which radiated a spirit no less worthy of the heights, no less legitimately eager for light, were produced only to be lost like meteors in the void of an apathetic society, destitute of ideals, discouraged and sick. . . . This sentiment of bitterness is manifested in his melancholy smile or in his hate for boredom, in the lightest page which this great writer throws into the abyss of indifference: and it burst

forth with a sob in his criticisms in *Las Horas del Invierno* and in the *Necrología del conde de Campo-Alange*.

§ 75. *The possible superiority of uncultured and self-taught people. How culture ought to try to resemble ignorance*

Numberless aptitudes, among them more than one superior one, and perhaps one of a genius, are lost in the crowd which the unfortunate law of human inequality removes from the stimuli of culture. But, to get nearer to the truth, we must add that, even if the discipline and the system which constitute culture are narrow and tyrannical so that culture becomes a close cloister, or a somnambulism methodically provoked for the sake of an idea, culture also includes responsibility, if not of abrogation, of the belittling of aptitudes. These aptitudes may be great because of their virtual strength, but they came united by nature to that weak resistance of character, to that inability to deny and protest which is characteristic of the soul in whom the faculties of credulity and imitation are more powerful than the faith and confidence in himself.

The schools of concrete spirits and, if one could say so, *immanent* in science and art, the methods of teaching, designed to make automatic the soul's initiative, have mediocratized the aptitude's gifts which, operating under other conditions, might have attained sublime heights. What an enormous store of energies, of rebellious audacities, does the active, individual consciousness need to break the iron band of a secular authority, organized in all the prestige of tradition, of the *magister dixit*, of unanimous opinion, like scholastic philosophy, the geocentric system, or the classicism of the XVIIIth century. . . . A moral characteristic of genius is a

daring will and a heroic arrogance in the confession and profession of a new truth that it has discovered. But it is not certain that what we call *genius* in the realm of intelligence, as an aptitude for discovery of something new, may *always* have the concomitant of unrestrained boldness to reveal and defend it in the sphere of the will. And in the cases that lack this boldness which is the complement of genius, what can save the independence of the spirit incapable of consciously resisting the authority which prevails over it, is to *ignore it*.

The renovation of human thought, the inseparable law of life, owes much to the great *uncultured* and the great *self-taught*. Direct observation, substituted for book-learning to which the initiated one may hasten to look for the observation of others, which he considers definitive; the very absence of a method which restrains the movements of the spirit within its trodden paths; and the forced exercise of spontaneity, originality and daring, these are the causes which help to explain the frequent effectiveness of free personal culture, for the great impulses of invention and reform.

The stranger, the vagabond, the unwary person trust themselves quite candidly to vast deserts, to jagged mountain ranges, to thick forests, which more cautious people would not frequent because it is an acknowledged fact that those places hold only vain dreams, error and confusion; but there, sometimes, a hidden path may lead to things that were not to be found in books. And therefore Leibnitz thought that the pursuit of the three great chimeras—*tria magna inania*—the quadrature of the circle, the philosopher's stone, and perpetual motion, has been the occasion of efforts and experiments that have benefited the human spirit more than a great number of investigations in which one obtains the truth directly, with adequate instruments and a sure method.

The greatest of all moral revolutions was born in the bosom

of a miserable little hamlet in Galilee, a revolution the splendor of which the Rabbinical letters can only feebly reflect. "And when the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue and all that heard Him were astonished and said, 'Where has He learned all these things? What wisdom is this which is given to him? . . . Is He not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and of Joseph and of Judas and of Simon? . . .'" The scene of the confusion of the doctors of the law one day confronted with the amazing knowledge of the sublime child who had never received their teachings has a profound and imperishable significance. Works and names less high, but still glorious, confirm it always. The force of originality with which Ambrose Paré laid the foundations of modern surgery by employing experimental methods owes something, without a doubt, to his youthful, relative independence from the authority of the ancients, thanks to his ignorance of the classic tongues in which the theories of Hippocrates, Galen and Albucasis were expounded. Bernard de Palissy was an outcast from school, and the liberty of his ignorance allowed him to go beyond the false limits of the science of his age. If Burns had studied Blair's precepts would he have poured his fertile and opportune wave of *barbarities* upon an artificial literature? . . . Rousseau is a type of innovator without scholastic training. His rebellious intrepidity, his depreciation of a certain truth, his courage to combat an inveterate paradox, that ingenious sophism, so full of felicitous enlightenment and promise, offer together all the excesses and advantages of semi-uncultured originality. About the same thing could be said of Sarmiento in our American scene. With this in mind, we can cite the examples of spirits of more incentive strength in science or in art, which is foreign to them by their professional choice since they have come to the science or art as a mere deviation



from the true course, either to clarify a particular aspect of their own studies, or through simple curiosity and amusement.

The cultivation of the intelligence must try to unite to its huge benefits those which are peculiar and characteristic of a relative ignorance, by reaping from them the liberty which, in the most of its discipline, allows the spirit to expand, through the habits of personal investigation which it stimulates, and through the gift of suggesting and opening vistas on that which goes beyond concrete solutions and *truths*.

§ 76. *How imitation is deceiving when it does not fit the personality*

Imitation is a powerful moving force of energies and latent aptitudes as long as it leaves our personality intact and untouched, and confines itself to stimulating our natural development. When a personality is by nature non-existent or when the idolatrous worship of a model inhibits and annuls it, imitation is not a beacon but a deceiving fog. Of course it may often function as the initiator of false vocations, misleading the concept that the mind forms of its contents and potentialities and provoking an illusion of fitness that is to a true vocation what the free activity of the awakened mind is to the mechanical movements with which the hypnotized individual carries out the commands of the will that holds him under control.

Always on the trail of all kinds of superiorities, of those that make an energetic and persistent suggestion to the consciousness of all human beings, runs a crowd of the deceived in whom the somnambulism which superior force produces does not stop in passive forms of admiration and belief, but assumes the active form of emulation, of imitation, of *anch'io*. . . . And if, for the majority, this hardly indicates an ab-

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sence of personality and individual stamp with which their minds would any way be characterized, there may be perhaps among some of the deceived persons the potentiality of an original and superior aptitude that has lost consciousness of itself, blurred by the illusory perception of the other, and perhaps will never reveal itself, since the soul has *gone astray* in a direction that was not the one assigned to it by Nature.

Among the ancients, it was rumored that when Plato arrived at Syracuse and Dionysus, the tyrant, showed desires of initiating himself, with the help of the philosopher's lessons, into the study of geometry, an unexpected legion of geometricians soon appeared at the court of Dionysus and his palace was ever filled with clouds of dust that the courtiers raised as they traced figures. Then, when the tyrant became bored with the science, the geometricians disappeared as easily as those very clouds of dust. Whims of no more stable origin are many of those that seem on account of their fervor to come from a deep and instinctive impulse; the soul, ravished by the magnetism of imitation, thinks it is obeying a divine voice that speaks to it from within, while it really obeys the harsh external voice of a shepherd that gathers his flock.

But even when the vocation happens to be genuine and born from the intimate possession of the aptitude, imitation seems to function as an extrinsic and disturbing force in its discipline and development. Thus, in art, every great personality that triumphs and commands drags after him, together with his disciples who have a real affinity with his spirit, a multitude of other followers who are drawn away from their natural and spontaneous tendencies, from the pursuits that would have been suited to them, by the fascination of that glorious example. When shall we be convinced that the traits whereby the schools of art are distinguished one from the other: a propensity to realism or idealism, to liberty

or to austere order, to subjectivism or to impersonality, are differences of history and classification of spirits rather than the disciplinary power of ideas. Not only must we respect these differences considered in this light, but we must awake and nurture in each one of them that spontaneity of impulse which surges from the depths of one's self! When this is once understood, the most anarchic, fruitful and exquisite peace would put the boundless extent of our fantasy into a simultaneous efflorescence; but the power of formula is great, and however much we may boast of broadmindedness, the tyranny of the taste of an epoch ends by producing, except in a few solitary spirits, a false uniformity that always is obtained at the expense of violating and perverting a great many people.

To have a clear conception of the nature of our own faculties, when an enslaving exterior norm dictates models and techniques approved by everyone, is somewhat difficult to achieve. To orientate yourself according to the knowledge that that conception gives you, even when this conflicts with the characteristics that are sanctioned by public opinion, is usually an act of heroic resolution. But from this resolution is born a bronze-like glory that remains when waxen glories have melted away; the more so if what we have raised above the current is not only the natural inclination of our own faculties, but also that of higher ideas and laws. The intellectual virtue of the greatest merit is, doubtless, that which consists of the sincerity and stoicism which one needs to preserve, in times of the darkening of reason, or the decadence of taste, the independence of judgment and the integrity of the personal temperament. We attain this virtue by renouncing the transient desire for fame, so that we can guide our aptitude along in its safe and certain path, which

will leave its personality well formed and its work at its height, even though this may mean our getting away, as we advance, from the side where the applause of the circus rings.

§ 77. *Unsuccessful vocations. "Come, death, so stealthily"*  
... *André Chénier*

We already know how an inauspicious environment prevents the birth of superior aptitudes and how, in certain cases, it weakens and deforms the function of those very ones to which it gave life, through too meticulous adaptations. Another evil of the things classified under the name of environment is that evinced by the noble vocations, which, after they have been defined and put to function, a common indifference interrupts and freezes, in such a way that it not only reduces their virtues and energy, by keeping them within the bounds of their peculiar activity, but even paralyzes them forever; and when the spirit has begun its flight through the world with a fine start, continues and ends it, pitifully, destitute of any aspiration that soars above the commonplace.

One of the causes of the inferiority of our American culture in the fields of art and philosophy lies in the fact that the persons capable of producing generally abandon their work before it matures. The cultivation of science, literature or art in America is usually a blossom of juvenility, which fades just as Nature begins to prepare its fruition. This premature death, when the superior perseverance of the will does not prevent it, is the imposition of social destiny that prevails over the spontaneous energy of souls as soon as the dynamism of youth has been exhausted in them—that impulse of inertia, of the force which we accumulate when we are thrown upon the stage of the world. The noble worker who lived in the soul

is dying, and death comes to him, in the words of an old verse, *stealthily*:

Come, death, so stealthily. . . .

The aptitude becomes weak or paralyzed like those slow currents which, lacking the impetus of a declivity, are little by little absorbed by the sands of the desert or fall asleep in still ponds without ever reaching the sea. A mere sketch instead of a definite form, a promise instead of a glorious fulfillment,—these are America's original contributions in the realm of thought and art.

There are still other lost hopes sadder than those that are frozen by ingratitude for an environment aided by weakness of will. But for these there remains only pity and silence. They are those, alas! which excite the most pathetic and painful feelings that can move the soul in regard to the reality of order in the world and of the justice that is contained in the laws which govern it. The destinies blighted by premature death, which seemed to an ancient bard to be a gift of love from the gods, are injuries hope can never forget. There exists a personification of these destinies (perhaps it already flutters to your memory) possibly more typical than any other, for the many secrets of beauty which he carried away with him to the shadow of the unknown and by the way he immortalized the realization of his misfortune in expressing it. It is André Chénier's tragic hero, dragged to his death in the cart of ignominy, where he beat his forehead and declared that *there was something* after death, as long as there remain a few amphoras filled with old wine for posterity to unearth when calm once more reigns in the world, just as the grandchildren of the vintager discovered the dregs of wine

grown old in Formian vessels as they were digging up the ground one day after the passing of the barbarians.

§ 78. *Ajax*.

. . . Hyacinths were blooming in the meadows of Laconia and on the banks of the Tiber. There was one variety whose blossoms bore two dark spots on each petal. One resembled the outline of an alpha, the other, the outline of an iota. The imagination of the ancients seized upon this, just as it did upon every oddity and caprice of Nature. In Vergil's third eclogue, Menalcas asks Palemon a riddle: upon what flower is an august name inscribed? He alludes to the fact that it is with the letters on the flower that the name Ajax begins, that Homeric hero, enveloped in a dense fog, who begs the gods for light, only for light, that he may fight, even though it may be to battle against them.

When Rome was the home of all the philosophies, Lupercius, the geometrician and philosopher, dwelled there. From a youthful love affair Lupercius had a daughter, whom he named Urania and educated in the love of knowledge. Let us imagine Hypathia at the dawn of her adolescence, a pure fragile soul whose eyes reflected the light of the papyri as intensely as the sun scatters its rays over throbbing Nature. She knew nothing about the country. One day an impulse which came from the spontaneity and curiosity of her spirit urged her to explore the rustic out-of-doors. She abandoned her cloister. The joy of flight freed her soul from stupor. In the freshness of morning she saw the Roman fields stretching out before her. The earth was smiling, all in bloom. Near a ruined wall a soft breeze was swaying some blue blossoms which fascinated her. There

were six of them arranged in a cluster at the end of a slender stem whose graceful curve arose from among the pale green dagger-shaped leaves. Urania bent over the hyacinths, enraptured not so much by their sweet fragrance as by those two letters which produced in her mind the illusion of a nature stamped with the symbols of learning. The fascination increased when she perceived, as a symbol of the sublime Idea, that the name of Ajax was the one written on the purest and most exquisite thing on the face of the earth; a sure sign, she thought, that over the gods shines that light which Ajax begged from them that he might conquer them. . . . But the flowers had only two letters of that name. A rich, ideal conception of perfect order prevented Urania from believing that the name once begun by Nature's hand could have been left unfinished as seemed to be the case with those flowers. In vain did she approach other hyacinths. Perhaps the missing letters would be found on the petals of other flowers. The field was vast and open, and flowers of all kinds adorned it everywhere. Looking for the remaining letters Urania ventured deeper into the field. She examined the daisies crushed by wheels and hoofs; the blood-red poppies; the narcissi which hoard gold in the midst of snow; the pale lilies; the violets, friends of shyness. She reached the edge of the pool where fresh white water-lilies seemed the dream of sleeping waters. All in vain. . . . She had persisted in the search so long that night was already approaching. She told her troubles to a shepherd who was gathering his flock. He laughed at her naïveté. Weary and disillusioned by the deception which had ruined her dream of Nature, she turned her steps back toward the city that cast an enormous shadow as the sun set.

That was Urania's day in the country. Who, in the presence of unfulfilled destinies, of smiling life nipped in the bud,

of good that looks promising but bears no fruit, has not experienced, sometime or other, the feeling with which Urania asked herself why Nature could not complete Ajax's name anywhere even though she had stamped its first two letters on the corolla of the hyacinth? . . .

§ 79. *Summary: vocation and aptitude*

Aptitude, in its virtual and primitive state, is a secret of Nature. The art of education which disregards this fact will bring us to the fatal conclusion of Bernard the Trevisan, who having spent his life in the mysteries of alchemy became disillusioned when he realized the vanity of his blackened retorts and declared: *To make gold, you need gold*. . . . But this precious metal is not always on the surface of the earth nor in the sands that auriferous rivers deposit on their banks, but often is hidden from human view in deep beds, in dark recondite caves where one has to search for it. Nor is it always in its natural state clean and shining, but frequently impure, mixed with dross that conceals it under its ugly exterior before fire digs its claws into it and prepares it for the consecration of the artist's chisel.

Vocation is the intimate sensing of an aptitude; vocation is the warning by which aptitude recognizes itself and instinctively seeks its means of development. But vocation and aptitude do not always go hand in hand. Even at the very times when a single purpose unites them they do not always maintain a proper correlation and proportion. And if it is not possible to artificially produce the superior aptitude where it does not exist by nature, it may be possible to awaken it when it is not conscious of itself; it may be possible to give it form where it has been vague and formless; it may be possible to make it strong by means of a doctrine, of education



or of habit; it may be possible to endow it with a will-power so that it may conquer the obstacles of the world; it may be possible to replace it if it loses its virtue, by exploring the dark recesses of the soul where perhaps latent potentialities and seeds sleep; it may be possible to enlarge it through this very discovery of new aptitudes, even when the first one persists and prevails over the others; it may be possible, finally, to stimulate love for it, when, in the soul where it dwells, indifference or caprice have neutralized it, to eliminate the vain love and to eradicate the false vocation in which aptitude may be nothing but an elusive shadow.

§ 80. *He who does not advance, retreats. Change must harmonize with order. The restlessness of the feverish man*

TO REFORM ONESELF IS TO LIVE—Besides those people who find it necessary to raise from the depths of themselves their real personality which has been enchanted by the sorcery of the world; and besides those other people whom a relentless fate hinders from developing the vocation that they pursue and the plan which gives them a norm, any individual who really *lives*, has, as a natural potentiality, the tendency to modify and renew himself; and this potentiality is manifested in thought as well as in action. The more emancipated, the stronger a man is, the more he is the lord and master of himself, the more capable he is of adapting the trend of his ideas and actions through his free initiative or through his conscious participation in his allotted task to his own internal development, to changes of time, place and circumstances and to the result of his deliberation and experience. The more powerful and fervent life is, the more intense is the desire for its renovation and enlargement. A distrust of the new and a fear of breaking the bonds of custom begin only with retro-

gression and vital impoverishment. He who does not feel the urge to advance, retreats. There is no stopping on the way up-stream, we must dominate the rapid waves; either our own will carries us forward or the current sweeps us back. Every one of us is a Vergil's boatswain—the waters over which he rows are the forces that govern the world.

But this continual renovation, like every movement that has an efficacious end, must harmonize with the great principle of order. Our desire for change and novelty, like every desire that does not become a will-o'-the-wisp, must be submitted to reason for definition and orientation and to the energy of the will for guidance to its adequate realization. The characteristic trait of irrepressible restlessness is not always an indication of exuberance and strength. When nonconformity to present conditions and an aspiration to new and better things are not determined rationally, nor translated into constant resolute action, they will be a devouring fever, not a life-giving warmth. Sterile turbulence, like sluggish somnolence, is a disease of the will.

You see, then, that there are two different ways of yielding to an indefinite substitution of desires. One is characteristic of spirits satiated before they have tasted pleasure, exhausted before they have acted. They can not find their peculiar atmosphere in any form of activity or any employment in life because they have not applied themselves to any one with sincerity and zeal. These spirits are like useless flying seeds at the mercy of the wind, that fall upon the earth a hundred times and are carried off again until they become one with the dust of the road. Their perpetual desire for change is nothing but a sign of an internal disease. Theirs is the malady of the feverish, the incapacity of the enervated, the instability of the doubtful. But there is, also, a desire for renovation that is a sign of life and health; a progressive im-

pulse sustained by the constancy of energetic, rhythmical, fruitful action that, by very reason of its triumph and its improvement at the end of each partial application is not satisfied or appeased by it. At first it regards itself only as a step of a staircase to be climbed. It measures the greatness of triumph not so much by the amount of good that it does, as by the chance it offers of aspiring to a greater good.

If you compare the agonized restlessness of the latter with the agitation of the sick man who searches anxiously for a comfortable position that may alleviate his pain and does not find it in spite of desperate, persistent efforts, you will recognize the image of a soul renewed by the power of its firm will. Like a traveler who climbs a slope on a cool day with the sole inducement of the soothing, fragrant breeze, each time he puts his foot upon the ground with the feeling of pleasure that is born from the free expansion of his energies, from the elasticity of vigorous muscles and from the pulse of the blood fired by the pure waves of air, he experiences a redoubled desire to go on, to ascend higher until he gains the summit that raises its luminous crest high above him.

The sick man and the traveler both disdain rest. Every minute they feel the need of changing the position of their bodies and of replacing each movement by another. But while the invalid's movements are disordered and disconnected, wasting away his strength in painful and useless fatigue, the traveler's are, on the contrary, easy and orderly: the expression of an energy that sustains its activity without torturing him and satisfies his desire without extinguishing it.

§ 81. *The vulgar facility for change because of the lack of personality*

Frequently there is in very ordinary characters this same habit of confused and inappropriate change that we distin-

guished from the plasticity of superior characters. Here it does not manifest itself in anguish and pain, in a disease of the mind as it does in the feverish man, but in an easy spontaneous way through a natural lack of personality. If the agitation that engenders a fever in a diseased mind is distinct from the movement that means progress for the person who makes it, not any the less so are the inconsistency and instability of the person who, not having formed his own character, adapts himself with docility and the utmost variability to the desires, plans and tastes suggested by every time and place, without knowing how to oppose them with any strength of resistance or rebellion. The character who is so irresolute and unstable traverses the whole circle of moral life with an astonishing celerity; he glides over transitional stages which would exact a laborious effort from others; he responds instinctively to the most varied motives. But this proclivity for instantaneous change without any anxiety or struggle is not favorable, but essentially opposed, to the aptitude for measured and orientated change which constitutes the superiority of a character capable of organic development. Neither one's own initiative nor the inspirations and examples of others will have the power to suscite in the soul, destitute of strength to retain its own personal being, a mode of conduct which will not be exposed to disaster and to replacement without reason or advantage, with the most subtle exchange of influences. Conscious and ordered change, then, implies a strength and steadiness of personality with which it equips itself in order to mould and retouch itself. The structures of education need a firm personal base without whose support they might as well be built upon the waves. To lay the foundations of personality, if it is not yet firmly established, is the first step in the task of remodeling and reforming it.

§ 82. *A typical example of personal renovation. The soul of Goethe*

The loftiest, most perfect, most typical example of a progressive life, governed by a principle of constant renovation and indefatigable apprenticeship, that modern biography offers us is, doubtless, that of Goethe. No soul is more changing than that one, vast as the sea, and like it most free and incoercible, none richer in multiple forms. But this perpetual restlessness and diversity, far from being futile movements or sterile dissipation, are the herculean labors of amplifying and perfecting a nature gifted to a greater degree than any other with the capacity for self-cultivation. They are the vital work in the undertaking of erecting what he used to call, in a majestic metaphor, *the pyramid of his existence*.

To retouch the lineaments of his personality, like a fastidious painter who is never satisfied with his canvas; to gain, as time passes, more in breadth, in intensity, in strength and in harmony and thus to cross a new boundary each day; to taste a new instructive experience; to share an unknown sentiment, whether actually or vicariously through human sympathy; to grasp an unknown, enigmatic idea; to understand a character different from his own: such is the standard of this life that rises in a gigantic spiral until it encircles the widest and most splendid horizon that human eyes have ever seen. That is why he detested monotony, uniformity and repetition of himself, and the robe in which inertia masquerades as action, just as much as inactivity that paralyzes and enervates. For this great spirit, inconstancy is man's great gift because he means the inconstancy that improves one; inconsistencies that weaken are of no importance if they also purify and cleanse.

Everything in him contributes to the process of constant renovation: intelligence, feelings and will. His infinite eagerness for the knowledge of all that Nature and the mind embrace continually brings new fuel to the devouring fire of his thought. Every form of art, each kind of science that attracts his interest offers him, as if to pay him for his love, a pristine beauty, an unexpected truth. He cannot contain himself within the limits of one system or one school. He revolts against any discipline that confines the spontaneous, sincere impulse of his thought. His philosophy is, like the light of each dawn, something new because it is born, not from formal logic, but from the vital, burning depths of a soul. When it brings to him across time and space the echo of a great human aspiration, a creed of faith, a dream of heroism or beauty, it is the magnet of his interest and sympathy. There is an identical trait in his sensibility which corresponds to the dynamic quality of his thought. Thirsting for conflicts and pleasures, he casts himself upon the world's reality—he wants to drink the experience of his heart until the cup of life is drained. He loves perennially, he perennially aspires, but he is careful to postpone his desires and passions so that they do not possess him until the moment when they can aid in perfecting his work. He was no more a slave to a constant affection than to an exclusive idea. When the vital force or the soothing nature of passion is spent in his soul and passion is reduced to an impulse of weakness or to a distasteful, unhealthy echo, he hastens to recover his liberty. And having perpetuated through art the remembrance of what he felt, he follows the spontaneous urge of life and seeks a new love. Above all this effervescence of his inner world appears the indomitable force of his will, always free and powerful. He broadens and renews and reproduces himself in action as well as in affections. His hope is like the natural glow of his energy. For him

the bitter taste of defeat is always the stimulus to new struggles; his heroic will completely resists poor health, frustrated happiness or glory that has palled. In a terrific duel with time he forces it to give opportunity to all his plans, he multiplies the years by the coefficient of his superhuman activity. There is no sun in his life that reveals a mechanical imitation, that faint reflection of what others have discovered. For him each day is a renewal of originality. Each day is different; each day wider; each day better; every one of them, like a Sysiphus of his own person, is consecrated to raise *another Goethe* from the depths of his soul and never ceases to remind him that he may leave his destiny incomplete. His ambition would be to look through everybody's eyes, to reproduce within himself the infinite complexity of the human drama, to identify himself with whatever has a being, to submerge himself in the very fountains of life. . . . Thus he reaches the pinnacle of his glorious old-age even more capable and fresh than in his green years. He dies asking for *more light*. This last wish is like a seal stamped upon his life and genius because it symbolizes the desire for knowledge in which his insatiable spirit persevered and the necessity for expansion that motivated his great vitality.

§ 83. Dilettantism. *The complexity of the contemporary soul*

Such is the desire to renew oneself when it is awakened and guided by a plan of human education, when it is sanctioned and brought to completion by the efficacy of action. If there is no finality or the order imposed by finality, if active realization is lacking too, there still remains that desire for intellectual transformation characteristic of the *dilettante*. *Dilettantism* is nothing but the indefinite desire for renova-

tion, deprived of an idea to govern and direct it and cheated by paralysis of the will that holds it within the bounds of contemplation. From the fecundity and the beauty that the impulse of renovation has are born all the superiorities and the prestige that are found in the spirit of the *dilettante*. They redeem him for contemplation and criticism from the fatality of his philosophy if he should take it as a conception of life and a practical school. The points of contact between the *dilettante* and the truly broad and perfectible temperament are: the gift of universal sympathy; an interest in every living thing, in the reality or thought of man; a solicitous *curiosity*; a penetrating, vibrant understanding; a longing for everything that remains unknown; and an aversion to eliminations and absolute proscriptions. Because of these virtues, today *dilettantism* represents the most characteristic picture of contemporary spirits, just as intolerance and passion were the natural characteristics of the spirits of heroic times.

A multiple depth, always characteristic of human nature, is more intensely so today than ever. From the waterfalls of the past flow currents more different than they have ever been before: a heritage of conflicting forces that have not ceased to struggle in our blood, souls of most diverse origins which bring together the genius of many peoples, the sap of many lands, the quintessence of different civilizations. Still more complex and contradictory than the sketchy personality that we receive from Nature is our acquired personality which unites with the former, complements and becomes a part of it in our lives through the influence of environment. Each one of these great forces of suggestion, of these great associations of examples, of feelings and ideas that manifest the total influence of the environment in which our souls are submerged: our immediate society, the books that change



the trend of our thought, the profession that guides our activity, the group of ideas under whose banners we fight, is a force that often operates divergently from all the others. This immense moral organism which has given to the world that our ancestors considered divided into separate national entities, like the islands of an archipelago, constant and easy communication, exchange of ideas, religious toleration, cosmopolitan curiosity, the telegraph, and the steamship involves us in a net of continually changing obligations. From time immemorial, from humanity that no longer exists, there comes to us not only many diverse influences through the complexity of our social origin, but influences whose number and intensity are multiplied by reason of that marvelous sense of historic sympathy, that second view of the past that has been, during the last hundred years, one of the most interesting characteristics of spiritual activity—almost a prophetic illumination. No age has understood as well as our own the soul of past civilizations and has evoked that soul to new life by use of the thaumaturgy of the imagination and of sentiments. In this way too, the past is a hypnotist capable of implanting deep, tenacious suggestions, no longer limited, as it was at the time of the historic enthusiasm of the Renaissance, to the heritage of the genius of a single civilization, but proceeding from whatever humanity has pursued as an ideal objective and from whatever has poured its spirit into a new and energetic mould. The neutralizing of social distinctions opens for each one of us divergent ways instead of the one clear road which used to be mapped out beforehand by the fate of social condition and ancestral example. Such powerful, inimical and competitive motives, intermingling and multiplying by virtue of reciprocal imitation that has its effective instrument in the great diffusion of written thought,

or rather in the *written soul* (because sensibility and will are also written down in letters), such powerful motives make our personal development a continual choice among an infinite number of proposals. Musical is our soul; a soul forged, as it were, from the very substance of music: vague, changing and incoercible; and that is why that most ethereal art is the one that best summarizes and expresses us; just as the firm concretion and olympic serenity of a statue are the faithful image of the permanence and tranquillity that we imagine the soul of ancient races possessed because of their lack of any discordant complexity.

§ 84. *The difference between dilettanism and the positive renovation of personality*

*Dilettantism*, then, agrees fundamentally with the most spontaneous and noble virtues of the spirit of our civilization. But the *dilettante* who has his intelligence, his artistic sensibility and his imagination active, has an inactive and deadened will; and this is the abyss that separates him from that superior family so well personified by the great spirit of Goethe. The volitional debility of the *dilettante*, his fundamental inaptitude for the task of forming and directing his own personality, reduce the internal movement of his consciousness to a show wherein it offers itself as an everlasting main attraction. He is satisfied with the renovation and movement that have their end in fantastic representation; he is content with the shadow and the semblance. Thus he deems everything worthy of contemplation; he has no real desire, no affirmative will; he concentrates his mental efforts upon understanding or imagining things, but never applies his will to a living, concrete task. The *dilettante* does not worry about the

development of his personality because he has renounced it beforehand; he makes chips of his *ego*, and scatters them throughout the wide world; he depersonifies himself and enjoys the sensuality that comes from his liberation from his individual being, a liberation through which he gains from his own spirit an unlimited capacity for modeling himself, transitorily, after every personality and every pattern. His reason does not aspire to a certainty because, even when he might recognize a means of finding it, he would heed only the picturesque parade of possible conjectures. His conscience respects no imperative because the only compass on his floundering ship is the instinct of good taste.

In an active as well as open-minded and educated person, the movement of renovation is, on the contrary, a real and fertile task, limited and governed by his personality. While in the *dilettante*, the impressions, the sentiments, the doctrines over which his consciousness flutters with faithless love, succeed one another capriciously and pass like the waves over water; he who truly renews himself *selects* and *gathers* wherever his actions carry him; he *harvests* for the real depth of his character, for the sum of his ideas; he collects what he found scattered, he triumphs over dissonances and transitory contradictions, and in the unity of his soul, he arranges in concentric circles his successive acquisitions, thus enlarging the scope of his personality, whose center, the will that keeps alive and guides its action, remains always fixed in place like the common center of circles, even when they are drawn ad infinitum. While Hamlet loses himself for the reality of life in the inactive contemplation of his dreams, Faust, like the spirit evoked by his magic, *renews himself in the tempest of action; in a whirlwind he rises and falls*. A soul of this temper cannot poison or wither the roots of the will with the sophistry of lazy resignation; he neither

fears to recognize the reality of a dream, nor to experience the pain of effort, nor does he anticipate or take for granted satiety; but as long as he remains in the world, he aspires and struggles; and the suggestions of disenchantment and boredom lead him to new combats. He establishes concord and harmony between thought and action without the breadth of one impairing the steadiness and efficiency of the other, without the fervor of the energy of the will opposing the eager expansion of the spirit. Then too, he establishes a conciliation between those changes and substitutions necessary to the person who ameliorates himself and the persistence of the integrity of the individual. Far from decharacterizing himself in the continuous change of influences, he does not diminish, but increases his originality each day; for each day he becomes more and more the moulder and master of himself. His power of sympathy does not degenerate into a negation of his person; he does not vanish, nor is he absorbed by every object, only to awaken from this dream-like state with which the *dilettante* is satisfied, reduced to a pure virtuality, restored to an indifferent and shapeless fluidity, suitable only for other fictitious personifications and other dreams. But he loses himself in a new object of love to emerge from it transfigured, broadened, master of new aspects and potentialities and withal, more personal and more constant than ever, as if he emerged from a miraculous bath of energy, intelligence and youth.

*Dilettantism* is imitation and disorder; the active and perfectible life is order and reality. Just as we previously distinguished the positive renovation of the personality from the unstable equilibrium of him who lacks personality and from the agonized and sterile restlessness of the feverish man, we should know now how to distinguish it also from the vain and alluring illusion of the *dilettante*.

§ 85. *False and artificial renovation. Alcibiades*

There is still another false kind of flexibility of spirit which we must distinguish from the kind that really renews and enriches the elements of moral life; it is the one which consists of the aptitude for change, which is active, but merely exterior and clever, directed to certain purposes and ends, but not to a superior cultivation of oneself. It serves well enough for traversing in serpentine movement the most antipodal conditions of life, for thus it gains in dexterity and practical knowledge, but not in the austere knowledge of interior improvement, and without the profound inspiration of personality. It is a histrionic aptitude that has no intimate relation with the noble and rare power on which the highly malleable character is based, although not seldom the one may succeed in ennobling its quality before the eyes of the world with the image and fame of the other.

A talent for action, rich in variety of forms and hues, a quick and keen intelligence, an infallible intuition for the fitness of each rôle, the magic of a superficial expression of sympathy, a waxlike plasticity in the different means of expression, in features, manners and words: these are the elements which make this adaptable, flexible, light and sinuous type capable of moulding itself with every society, of improvising or supplanting every custom, suitable for the most varied and sudden transitions, not with the obedient passivity of one in a suggestive or *amorphous* state, but through its own free and sagacious initiative. To the sincere moulder of his own personality this type is what the latinized Mercury, clever and utilitarian, was to the Greek Hermes, master of a thousand dexterities and inventions but in a sublimely religious sense. . . . The legendary grandfather of this

generation of souls is Panurge; its plebeian, roving personification is called Gil Blas, or Figaro, if we should temper it with a strain of poetry and enthusiasm.

But in the reality of history, and rising to a much higher sphere of selection and elegance, it has an immortal name: the name of Alcibiades. The grace of a sham, but clever *proteism* was in this Greek a happy invention of Nature. No one more Olympically unchangeable in his reality of living, jovial marble. No one with a soul more foreign to those impulses of rectification and reform of oneself that are born of sincerity of thought and sympathetic contact with the sentiments of others. No one essentially more impervious to all influence unconnected with that atmosphere that was like an expansion of his own spirit: the atmosphere of Athens. But Alcibiades, single in the depth of his frivolous, elegant nature, becomes a legion in artificial guises and felicitous imitation. Willingly he rids himself of all harmful transparency; wherever he is he immediately assumes the mask characteristic of that race, that school, or that society, so that he succeeds in being a representative man among them all. And if at Sparta there is no one who surpasses him in austere living and military temper, no one can surpass him in Thrace as a sot and horseman, or in the land of the Satraps in the splendor and luxury of his existence. If one observes him in Aspasia's drawing-room, he is the libertine of Athens; but when he attends the lessons of Socrates, he is the dialoguist of *The Symposium*; in Potidea and Delium, he is the heroic hoplite; or in the Olympic stadium, he is the victorious athlete. He takes a hundred forms, wears a hundred masks, adjusts his appearance and actions a hundred different ways; but none of this reaches his inner self, his heart, his consciousness. Amid so many changes, nothing of what is real and alive in his personality has been altered. He is always Alcibiades, actor on the

stage of the world, Proteus of parody, a symbol of that sinuous and deceitful characteristic of the Greek genius which is personified in poetry by Ulysses and which reappears, according to Taine, in the arguments of the Sophists and in the arts of the refined and cunning *greculus*, the parasite of Roman homes.

§ 86. *Travel as an instrument of renovation. The aureole or penumbra of our "Ego"*

To put into practice our idea of self-renovation there is one great precept: travel. To reform oneself is to live. To travel is to reform oneself.

Against the primitive, inferior tendencies to imitate which consist of the automatic obedience to a model that bears a likeness to the imitator, whence is born the impulse of that other imitation of oneself which we call *habit*, against these tendencies there is no force so efficacious as the imitation that acts in a new way, divergent from heredity, from custom and from the tyranny of the fear of consequences. A servile force, if one compares it with the invention and supreme spontaneity of consciousness that are superiorities at which one cannot arrive immediately through routine imitation, and that one can never extend to all thoughts and acts of life—the suggestion of what is strange and remote is, nevertheless, a liberating force, for it raises us above the narrow social life that binds us to family or to country and, besides, it begins to make the spirit flexible and agile and it exercises the power of the will to bring us near to that complete emancipation of one's own being which constitutes the ideal goal of an existence progressively guided.

There is in the personality of each one of us a diffuse part that lives in our ordinary environment, in the things that form

a mould after which we pattern ourselves from our birth. To exchange this mould for another by moving from the place where one lives is to tend toward inevitably modifying, to a greater or lesser degree, what is essential and characteristic in personality. The multitude of images which go to make the synthesis of the great image of our native land: the sky, the air, the light, the hues and forms of the earth, the lines of the buildings, the noises of the country or of the street, the faces of people, the sound of known voices; all that harmonious entity is not outside of you, but forms a part of you; it impresses its stamp upon you and is reflected in each one of your acts and words; it is, when one considers it more objectively, an aureole or penumbra of your ego. And of those familiar things which your senses continually place before you, habit, tradition, the nameless soul that issues forth from this conglomerate society, all conspire to force you into certain ways of thinking, certain idolatries, certain obsessions. Once those material things are removed from you, the captivating power which they exerted loses a great deal of its influence and, although those bonds which are enduring, sacred and natural tendencies persist, the other weaker ones, born only of stubbornness, bias or prejudice, are broken. They disappear like the threads of a vast cobweb inside of which your freedom to judge and to act has been captured like an imprisoned fly. The expatriation of travel is, therefore, the best antidote for routine thought, for fanatical passion, and for all kinds of rigidity and obsessions. And it can be even more—it often exerts an immediate regenerative force in overcoming more serious moral lapses if they are rooted in daily experience and habit, as, in a physical sense, it succeeds in stopping the development of old maladies which might become chronic forever if there were no change in the way of life and the surrounding influences. The fugitive who leaves behind him the



scene of his temptation and ignominy, seeing the results of remunerative work, takes the handle of the plow and becomes a peaceful tiller of the fertile soil. An atmosphere saturated with sensuality creates the soul of the courtesan in the mother's womb; to remain in this environment brings the soul to its fatal flowering; the novelty of the desert redeems it—this is the story of Manon.

The feelings of him who returns home from distant lands are usually mingled with an impression of strangeness toward the things with which he was once intimate and even toward his own former personality which, here in this world where he formed it, appears in his memory and is projected before his eyes as if it were the figure of a stranger. Saint Ambrose tells a story about a lover who, in order to forget his passion, seeks absence as the remedy. For a long time he wanders; when he returns, he is sought by his old love who says to him: "Guess who I am: It is I, I, myself"; to which he answers, "But I am myself no longer." This story lends vivid color to a psychological truth that seems clearer today since we know how much of the relative and the uncertain there is in the human make-up. The truth of that reply is confirmed, among many others, by Sully in his admirable study on *Illusions* in which he shows how a considerable and violent change of circumstances not only tends to cause profound modifications in our sentiments and ideas, but also comes to disturb and to rectify, although only slightly, our idea of our personal continuity.

§ 87. *Personal emancipation and solitude. The monk Teotimus*

There are two kinds of retirement by which one can escape the stamp of the environment in which he lives and can regain possession of his liberty: traveling and solitude.

In fact, both are necessary; and a life well directed toward a persistent and efficacious renovation will wisely alternate these periods of isolation from his habitual society between solitude and traveling.

For certain conditions of the soul and at special periods of time, solitude is a diamond shield, a strengthening sleep, and ineffable balm. But solitude fails as the constant and only way of insuring the integrity of personality against the oppressions and deceits of the world, because it lacks the necessary instrument for the development of the contents of our consciousness—action; and it also lacks that precious bond to which it could entrust the work that it leaves unfinished—sympathy. Only the shock of action can bring to the surface of the soul whatever lies hidden and inert in its depths; and only the stimulus of sympathy can strengthen and sustain our spontaneous reaction to the point where it may liberate itself from the chains of prejudice and habit. Continuous solitude shelters and nourishes fallacious concepts not only about the external world from which it separates us, but also about ourselves, suggesting to us figurations which, being beyond our nature and our strength, will crumble into dust at the slightest conflict with reality, since they were not evaluated in comparison with others, nor tried on the touchstone of temptation and struggle.

#### THE MONK TEOTIMUS

There has perhaps never been a hermit who lived in so unpleasant a retreat as Teotimus, a penitent monk; he dwelt upon heights more fitting for eagles than for penitents. After pleasure and glory, he tasted the bitterness of the world; he owed his conversion to pain. High above the futile strivings of men, he sought a refuge; he selected a place where the mountain was roughest, where the rocks were most arid, where the solitude was saddest. Only naked peaks, brownish

in color, closed in the horizon's expanse. The ground was like a gigantic bare back; not a tree, not even a weed on it. Here and there in a cleft in the rocks a cavern would open, like a dark wound; and in one of these Teotimus found his refuge. Everything was motionless and dead as far as the eye could see, except a waterfall that threw its meagre stream down the narrow chasm as if it were shedding the tears of the rocks and the eagles that flew above among the peaks. Upon this terrifying solitude Teotimus hoisted his soul, like the remnant of a flag torn in the battles of the world, for God's wind to cleanse it from blood and mire. Soon, almost without any struggle against temptation and without any nostalgic memories, divine grace came to him, like dreams to a body wearied with fatigue. He submerged his heart completely in the love of God; and as this love grew, an intense and clear realization of human insignificance produced in this diamond of divine grace the most humble and sad humility. Of the hundred masks of sins he hated pride most, for it seemed to him that pride, having appeared before all the rest, was sin's true countenance rather than its mask. And on the barren and desolate rock, facing the solemn silence of the peaks, Teotimus lived, thinking only of the unparalleled grandeur veiled behind that canopy of Heaven, of which he could see only a small part, and of his own smallness and unworthiness.

So years passed; long years during which the consciousness of Teotimus reflected from his soul only the images of self-abasement and penance. If perchance some doubt as to the constancy of his humble piety embittered him, it was born from the extreme of his very humility. Teotimus had placed a condition upon his vow, he was to go, once he had spent a definite period in retirement, to visit the tomb of his fathers and then to return to the desert forever. When the time had elapsed, he set out for the nearest valley. At the

foot of the mountain it grew less barren; some shrubs, the traces of a more luxuriant vegetation, relieved the nakedness of the ground. Teotimus sat down to rest beside one of them. How many years it was since his eyes had seen a flower, a branch, or anything which formed the gay, undulating mantle that hangs from the shoulders of the world! He looked down at his feet and saw a little white flower that shook upon its stem, which lay flat on the grass, tremulously and timidly, with every breath of the gentle breeze. It had a gentle, shy grace, without beauty, without fragrance. . . . Teotimus, who could not help noticing it, began to contemplate it with tranquil delight. As he noticed the simple harmony of its white petals, the rhythm of its movements, the grace of its weakness, a sudden thought arose from his contemplation. Heaven took care even of that tender little flower; God gave it a ray of His love, of His satisfaction with the work that was good. . . . And this thought was not pleasant, loving and sweetly disturbing as perhaps it is to us. It was bitter; and it evoked in his breast a kind of hesitant rebellion. Never on the barren and desolate cliff had he tainted his humility with the thought that now disturbed him. God's love was not, then, all for man's soul? The world was not the desert on which a rare flower, a flower with thorny thistles, the human soul, might half open, mindful that it did not deserve the light of Heaven, but yet the only one to enjoy the blessing of this light. It was futile to struggle to remove the eyes of his soul from this persistent thought; it returned to Teotimus again and again, as if a tenacious persecution would fix it upon the clarity of his consciousness. And behind this, from the depths of the hermit's being, came a rumbling, drawing nearer and nearer . . . a rumbling, more and more sinister . . . a rumbling, whose sound he recognized; it issued from gullets which he had believed mortally dried up in

his soul. A weak little flower with its gentle insistence was enough to make the hidden monster, pride, concealed behind the illusion of humility, leave his abode . . . in the joyous kindness of the morning, while a ray of sun played upon his heart, Teotimus, fiercely and wrathfully, crushed the defenseless flower beneath his foot. . . .

§ 88. *Solitude and remaining in one's birth-place*

Seclusion in the bit of earth where one was born is but solitude extended, or a penumbra of solitude. All the misconceptions in the judgment of himself, which constant and uninterrupted solitude created in the imagination of the recluse, will also take root in the spirit of the person who never leaves his native land. But as soon as he has breathed a foreign air, they are dispelled. Sometimes this may be worthless or it may be a restitution; it may make him realize the vanity of the fame which flattered him among his own people; or it may, on the contrary, teach him what he should estimate most highly, what may be of greater value than he thought. It may make him like the hermit, whose illusion of saintliness vanished in the presence of the little wild flower; or like one who, having lived in seclusion and inactivity, thinks himself a weakling and coward until, suddenly thrust into a perilous situation, he displays an unsuspected bravery and, once conscious of this superiority, he works thenceforth under its influence, increasing his pride and extending the range of his ambitions.

§ 89. *Travel and our capacity for sympathy*

Travel increases our faculty for sympathy, a force which aids transforming imitation by redeeming us from seclusion

and drowsiness within the limits of our own personality. While our conception of men and things, different from those that surround us, does not rest upon a knowledge of that part of the infinite reality that lies beyond our immediate environs, perhaps the images that we conceive of them will never strike our sensibility with the force of which they are capable when fancy, nourished and trained by the precious gifts of varied and extensive visual experience, gains the power to imagine, with a warm semblance of life, other things which have not come to it through the medium of the eyes.

The first journey you take is the beginning of the liberation of your fancy, which disrupts the false uniformity of the image that you have formed merely from the elements of your environment. Your capacity to foresee and to imagine dissimilarities in Nature's inexhaustible store becomes greater from the moment that you conquer, in a way possible only through the direct perception of the senses, your unconscious tendency to make general all of that narrow reality that surrounds you. Travel, therefore, not only teaches us to accurately imagine the things that occur during our absence in the countries we have seen, but it also intensifies the acumen and vigor of the imagination to supplement actual knowledge with all the rest of the things in the world. And even more than about our modern world, you will gain from travel a proper intuition about the past, a living and colorful conception of other epochs and other civilizations, even though it be through lands that bear no traces of relics of that past. What is important is that you free yourself, by the efficacy of your first journey, from the torpid imagination to which we are always condemned by the sight of that one face of reality: that which we found before our eyes at birth. So, roused from its stupor and stimulated, your fancy will then become light enough to sail, itself, through space, or through time, to the

sight of any reality different from the one which concrete perception places before you.

In the knight-errant school of the world, one's faculty for conceiving images enlarges, is heightened, multiplies; as sensibility is a power under the influence of the imagination, and as the person feels most who best imagines what he feels, so the better and the more vigorously you visualize the lives of remote men, so much more apt will you be to participate, through sympathy, in their sufferings, their joys and their enthusiasms. In this way the horizon of your moral life will be widened, as that of your eyes is, when you ascend a mountain; and you will recognize, in analyzing them, emotions different from those that have touched you, yourself, or your people. Hence arises the fact that for the man whose imagination has been diffused and trained by a great deal of observation there has always been a greater possibility of loosing the oppressive fetters of habit and of redeeming or reforming his personality.

§ 90. *Nostalgia: the elements that go to make it*

Sacred is that melancholy voice which, during your absence from your native land, comes from the depth of your soul, begging you to return to its bosom and to awaken a faint crowd of sweet memories. Beautiful and pitiable is nostalgia. But its ideal pain, born of love, is, in reality, mingled with elements less noble and less pure; and not always is a delicate sensibility the thing that engenders it.

How often what you take for a faithful impulse of the heart—your aversion toward the new things you see and the new people with whom you come in contact—is nothing but the protest which your personality, subjugated by habit, benumbed in tranquillity, offers to whatever happens in some

way to broaden and excite it! All the limitations of the inactivity, the servility that arise in you, are disguised, then, from your own consciousness, by the mask of that love. You are annoyed, unconsciously, by what reveals your inferiorities to you; you lack the inner courage which demands from you the understanding of all in human nature that is foreign to you. You touch the limit of your sympathetic capacity; instinctively you defend the prejudices of which you have become fond and the flattering ignorance of your egoism or your pride. And all this is adorned and poetized with the melancholy of loving remembrance, which is the purest and best thing about nostalgia, although in its complexity less noble elements prevail. Among these are: the resistance of an aloof, obstinate personality; the inequality of its economy in favor of the elements of conservatism and custom; its lack of a *protean* aptitude. This is the virtue of renewing and transforming oneself, thanks to that faculty for adaptation which makes man a citizen of the world, and which, in its most intense expression, begets another kind of nostalgia, well known to men endowed with sympathy and amplitude: the nostalgia for lands which have never been seen, for countries which have not yet inspired love, for human emotions which have never been experienced.

§ 91. *The professional traveler is a soul opposite to the ascetic and the stoic.* Vagabondaggio

Since journeys are an incentive to renovation restlessness and industry are the enemies of all kinds of iron rust and mildew; the fire and the hammer with which ideas and sentiments are reforged, they are wont to be regarded with disdain by those who are inclined to make certain the constancy of personality by the claims of a votive, obstinate and im-



mutable idea. Variety on the stage of life does not harmonize with the mortal permanence of the things behind. The instinctive traveler belongs in the natural history of souls in a category opposite to that of the ascetic and the stoic. He remembers how the stoicism of Seneca thunders in the *Epistolae ad Lucilium* against those who think to change their souls by traveling, "as if they were not traveling with themselves," and he recalls Kempis who teaches that "imagination and a change of place have deceived many."

Perhaps the only comprehensive and curious spirit who has looked with disdain upon the pleasure of traveling is Montaigne. But this amiable sceptic's sedentary vocation was, doubtless, rather than a natural inclination, the persuasion of his infirmity, which made him shudder at the excitement and anxiety of journeys. Among inventors, revolutionists, rebels and those goaded by the taunts of doubt and censure, the majority is always composed of souls who have something of the nomadic about them; souls for whom it is the tedium and melancholy of blindness not to see far off in the distance; for whom an occasional change of air and light is a vital necessity which, not wholly satisfied, produces an anguish and a suffering as difficult to alleviate as that which Beaunis, in his *Internal Sensations*, has called "the pain of inactivity," if we understood by that the pain that is born of prolonged immobility in the same attitude (even though it be one of a most restful repose: a kind of pain which is, perhaps, worse than extremes of cruelty in the most excessive tensions of movement and effort).

In this inclination for roving, at times tyrannical and nearly an obsession, a note of *vagabondaggio* takes root. This is included among the stigmas that belong to superior minds by those who see in it a certain kind of degeneration. It is a *stigma* almost always fortunate and fecund, since so many

people admit that assimilation in which vital impoverishment shares in name with a manifold, vigorous health of spirit. This *vagabondaggio*, in Giordano Bruno, is the going and coming of his bellicose maturity, from city to city, from one famous school to another, longing for a reason to fight someone, for the sophism and prejudice with which to destroy, like a greyhound that excitedly scents the tracks of game. It is, in Byron, an implacable restlessness, an infinite nostalgic aspiration which carried him, as it did Milton's Satan when he sought the path to heaven from the darkness, across land and sea, in pursuit of a dream of wild, sublime liberty, of beauty, of truth, of love—farther and farther, leaving behind the gardens of Baetica . . . the marbles of Italy . . . the Parthenon—always farther, as long as the pale keeper of the road does not interpose her arms; he is a faithful copy of the movement of the waves, which more than once showed him visions that spoke of his fate and of his soul, beating upon the sides of the ship and beckoning to Harold and the Corsican:

Once more upon the waters! Yet once more! . . .

§ 92. *The travelers of the Renaissance. The walker: Paracelsus. The professional traveler is always a "walker"*

To the North! To the South! To the East! To the West! They are the departing ships; they are old ships: galleons and caravels, behind whose unfurled sails follows a god with puffed-out cheeks: they are the glorious ships of the Renaissance that are embarking to circle the globe . . . and when the revived Argonauts, who go in them, return from their Colchis, they not only bring back a splendid idea of the earth and a miraculous material wealth, but they also bring with them a new soul, a new conception of life, a new species of

man. All this is propagated through emulation and sympathy; it results, as regards intelligence, in a sense for observation and a malicious doubting; as regards sensibility, in the joy of living and the love of liberty, which will make the enclosure of the cloister seem more narrow; and as regards the will, in a spirit of heroic adventure and an ambition for glory and fortune, which raises the penitent from the dust and instills courage into his pectoral cavity, hidden between his shoulders under a humble coat-of-mail of sackcloth.

But it is not by these epic travelers that I mean to illustrate the influence of journeys on spiritual development. I wish, rather, to illustrate it by another kind of nomadic souls, less extraordinary and gigantic, which appears incarnate to posterity in famous names of our own times as well as of centuries past. I allude to the *walker*, to one who travels on foot: a workman in order to complete his apprenticeship, or a curious person in order to give vent to his passion, traverses with slow steps provinces and whole countries. From hamlet to hamlet, from castle to castle he goes, living by the work of his hands or the mercy of heaven, caressing with longing glances the naked beauty of reality.

The personification of this errant taster of experience and "worldly knowledge," this noble vagabond, this student whose library is the length of the road, this sage whose hand knows the staff better than the pen, might be that great and extraordinary Paracelsus. A rebel, without any laws but his own judgment, revolting against the teachings of tradition; an alchemist for whom alchemy became real knowledge, destined in modern time to notable glory; a renovator of medical science and the art of healing and, in his external appearance, a picturesque type of rare men, Paracelsus carried inborn in his mind the idea of reading Nature from herself, rather than from the pages of famous books. The school of

this observer and instinctive experimenter was his indefatigable traveling, which has become legendary in tradition. It was voluntary wandering; he went as a beggar or a juggler. He traversed all the known lands of his time; his sack across his shoulder, never certain of the route he was to follow on the morrow, his eyes and ears alert not only for the slightest movement and the vaguest sound that might come from commonplace things, but also for each testimony and opinion of commonplace souls: the friar's sermon, the workman's observation, the barber's tale, the gypsy's prophecy, the quack's prescription, the hangman's experience.

The traveler who is a traveler by nature always belongs, intimately and essentially, to this clan of spirits, although he may live centuries after Paracelsus; and although he may travel on the wings of a locomotive, may he sometimes know how to prescind the latter! The fiery monster with which we have conquered distance is a glorious symbol, if we judge it for the utility of rapidly exchanging ideas and products, for the bonds that it ties and the prejudices that it removes; but if we were to consider it as a discipline of travel, it would be a symbol of poor, superficial vision, of being carried with the herd along the invariable road which two iron ribbons mark out upon immense fields, to the cities where the steps of the newcomer will be governed by an officious *guidebook*, that assembles in a small octavo the instructions of Common Sense, personified by a book-seller from Leipzig, or a printer from Albemarle Street. The genuine traveler is the man who succeeds in recovering, by the spontaneous inclination of his spirit, all that those easy and comfortable means of travel have removed from journeys: their original, delightful interest, their educative power. Intuitively directing his observation, as if in response to a magnetic needle that he carried within his soul, he keeps his liberty and touches reality in order to

believe what is written in books; he takes the untrodden path, and stops where people have agreed there is nothing to see: the instinctive traveler is always the *walker*, the rover, the vagabond.

§ 93. *Travelers who, upon their return, magnetize a society.*  
*Opposite forms of this influence*

For the superior elements of society everywhere, who are entrusted with moulding it after the dictates of imitation and custom, journeys must be an institution, an exercise of quality, like the one which in former times made the brilliance and honor of nobility depend upon their skill in arms. Where the instructive habit of traveling is lacking in those who predominate and rule, who set the law of opinion and taste, all industrious social activity will be weakened, to some degree, by the sedentary state of the best or the outstanding people.

In spiritual development, in the progress of laws, in the changing of customs, the journey of a superior man is often the *boundary* which separates two epochs, the clock which strikes a great hour. The traveler returns, bringing in his soul a suggestion which radiates from him and disseminates until it embraces a whole society in its magnetic net. Voltaire's journey to England is an act upon which depends the communication of the doctrines of liberty to the French spirit, where they must have expanded and become transfigured to assume the humanitarian, generous form of the immortal Revolution. And later, the journey of Madame de Staël to Germany marks the beginning of the change in ideas which reached its plenitude in the literary, philosophical, and political renaissance of 1830. From the breezes of Italy to the ears of Garcilaso came, or at least acquired, a definite form, the new style of rhyming, which gave an adequate and magnifi-

cent instrument to the great literature of Spain. Again, centuries ago, the Duke of Rivas was to bring from his journeys as a bandit the first ray of the literary dawn which restored to his people's imaginations a part of their former vigor and originality: these journeys, of the author of *Don Alvaro*, similar to those which Almeida Garret, also aroused by civil unrest, made at the same time infused, at his return, the same opportune florescence of romanticism in the native spirit. The legendary journeys of Miranda, hero at Washington's side and hero at the side of Dumouriez, and Bolivar's journey through Europe, aflame with the glory of Napoleonic campaigns, are the crevices which open the way, in the colonial cloister of America, for the portentous breezes of liberty.

The effect of these historical journeys generally depends on the virtue of the admiration and the enthusiasm that take possession of the traveler's spirit. But not seldom does the efficacy of a glorious journey rest, quite oppositely, on the negative influence of deception and disillusion. In the first case, the newly perceived reality serves the mind as an original, as a norm to which it then tries to adapt the old reality to whose bosom it always returns. In the second case, the things with which we set up acquaintance cheat and remove our anticipated concept of them; or they reveal to the traveler evils that he did not suspect; and so the model which the traveler brings back he obtains by negation and by opposition. Typical examples of these two opposite influences of travel are, respectively, that of Peter the Great to the countries of the West and that of Luther to the court of Rome. Peter, impressed by the prestige of western civilization, returns to his empire, concentrating his whole soul upon the thought of reshaping this rude clay according to the model which obsesses him; and puts his hand to the task with the happy brutality of a civilizing Hercules. Luther, terrified by the

abominations of papal Rome, to which he had gone without the slightest spirit of revolt, compares that base reality with the sublime ideal which it evokes and usurps; and he feels awakening within him the indignation of a mocked man, the horror of a sacrilegious accomplice. From that instant, he burns with eagerness to set up against that impure Babylon the divine Jerusalem of his dreams.

§ 94. *Journeys in the education of the artist*

Every traveler whose keen observation is enlivened with a spark of imagination is, upon his return, something like an old legendary adventurer; like the sea captains who did great things long ago when the world still possessed the enchantment of mystery; like the mate of Marco Polo or of Vasco de Gama, who returned from strange lands with a thousand precious products of those remote, rich climes: gold, perfumes and ivory, and a wealth of glowing, picturesque tales, of colorful adventure, which he related to a circle of awed, ecstatic listeners.

Travel is to the inventive spirit of the artist, what free flight through blossoming meadows is to the honey bee. Both of them will return to their work cells laden with booty. Not only will the imagination, provided with new plunder from reality, be able to discover or compose unknown harmonies within the infinite variety of things. Those who have explored the mysteries of artistic invention often tell us how, without our being aware of it, all the elements which will enter into a work of our imagination are already present and half-arranged in it. They lack only an impression, an idea, a visible object, whose touch will complete and animate that unfinished synthesis, so that it may appear living to the consciousness of the artist and to the eyes of men. It is the in-

effable and decisive work of a moment. Before that moment comes, the work is like a picture in a dark room, like Galatea before the kiss of love. Perhaps it will never come, and the work which might have been glorious remains buried and lost forever. But the greater the change and the movement of your sensibility are, the more you perceive of the subtle confidences of things, so much easier will it be for the happy touch to be produced. So, a form that strikes you on passing, a hue, a word, or a tremor of human reality, met by chance upon the varied face of the earth, may be the merciful hand that will save the immortal creation of your mind.

Nature's pictures, the sight of animate or inanimate beauty, diffused in form or color over land and sea in that immense, undulating web which travel opens before your eyes, not only educate your senses and your imagination, but they also affect the most spiritual, most ineffable part of your sensibility. They reveal to you the depths of yourself and of the human soul in whose profundity your own soul lies submerged. It is due to our faculty for projecting the shadow of our spirit upon whatever we see that a landscape discloses to us, perhaps, a new intimate state, unfolds itself to our consciousness by a mysterious key and opens new vistas upon the enchanted castle of Psyche.

He travels who feels in himself a spark that can mount into the flame of art. For the man who does not need to know how to penetrate living reality with a discerning eye, the mystery of the world ends with pictures and books; but for the artist, every journey is a discovery, and for great artists, more than a discovery, a creation. Each time one of these conqueror-magicians of Nature allows his senses and his soul to move about among the spacious multitude of things, a new universe is born, rich with color and life. A great artist who travels is God, who creates the world and sees that it is good.



The artist does not see what was there, already created by the hand of God, but he recreates it and takes delight in the beauty of his own work.

§ 95. *Nature and Art: Italy, Milton, Goethe*

Nature and Art; the external model and the sublime image; the young most loving mother and the graceful son who plays on her lap vie in provoking, with the signs that they make to us, the suggestion which will awaken latent vocations and will define and guide those that have remained uncertain. What a power, almost an ecstatic illumination, can be exercised by the sight of the sublime things of the material world upon one who sees them for the first time with the same candid joy, the same candid amazement, of the person who first discovered them! . . . The sea . . . the mountains . . . the desert . . . In the solitude of the American forest, Chateaubriand finds the infinite spaciousness needed to upset the soul oppressed by the conventions of the world; and then *René* is born, and in an immense embrace the grandeur of a savage land and the grandeur of human grief are united. And of the virtue of the marvels that Art works upon these spirits whose superior faculty needs only to be awakened and aroused, Italy speaks, who knows of it. Her ruins, her pictures, her statues speak; the halls of her theaters and the choirs of her churches speak, and, if time can hold so many names, let them speak who, at some moment in their travels, heard an unknown vocation announced to their spirits, or rather those who confirmed and gave a definite course to an already recognized one: men like Poussin, who wasted their uncultivated genius there, or men like Rubens, who came to perfect their mastery as they contemplated her models; those like

Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn, in the divine art of music, who owe to what they heard there an indispensable element in the making of their personality and their glory.

He who has once made this pilgrimage remains edified by it forever. If Milton succeeded in keeping the flower of his lofty poetry from the smoke of sadness and tedium in which puritanism obscured his environment and his very soul, how much must he have owed this to the luminous unction which the sun of Italy left in the recesses of his spirit, from the time of that journey on which he made the acquaintance of the joy of Nature and the supreme order of the imagination! Theological austerity; an unpleasant, arid morality; a fanatical limitation of judgment marked the part of his personality that he manifested in action and controversy; but his fancy and his sensibility kept, to the joy of men, the prize which his soul won from that passing visit.

A still more beautiful example is that of Goethe who was transfigured by the same spectacle of the art and nature of Italy. In the constant triumphal development of his genius, the occasion of his trip to the country for which he was presently to make Mignon sigh, is a glorious transit after which, his sentiment of life magnified, his mind quieted, his sensibility retempered and polished, he comes to entire possession of himself and rules with a firm hand the products of his creative force. When he is confronted with the relics of sacred antiquity, when his soul is opened to the light of the south, he recognizes by real and direct contemplation what, through an intuitive, loving prefiguration he had already glimpsed in that world which harmonized with his most intimate self; and it is the deep reality of his own being that he discovers that henceforth prevails in his life, governed from afar by the serenity and perfection of marbles, and free from vain clouds and the weakness of passion.

§ 96. *The unmistakable stamp of travel on artistic work*

In the writer and in the artist who have passed lovingly and profitably through this initiation of travel there is an unmistakable breath of reality, of animation, of freshness, which transcends distance, like the fragrant sea breeze, or the smell of earth soaked by rain.

This breath is sensed rather than defined. The books which have it are ambrosia of the imagination. *Don Quixote* has it; upon each page, transparent beneath what is narrated or described, is the man who has wandered about the world. And if we go back to the first example and *archetype*, the *Odyssey*, still more adequately representative, has it. In its delightful verses the genuine sentiment of curiosity and adventure and that never-failing exactitude and precision in the description of routes and places clearly reveal the experienced traveler: from the isle of Chios or the coast of Smyrna, before he relates his hero's labors, he, himself, has plowed through the "wine colored waves" on a raft manned by oars and has enjoyed the kindness of hospitable Jupiter among different peoples.

It is often easy to distinguish in the same writer, by the quality of his thought or his style, the work which precedes from the work which follows this transcendent occasion of his first travels. Théophile Gautier was born to see and to express the beauty of things; but as long as there was no real spectacle to captivate his senses that were dominated by an instinct for the exotic, his longing gaze turned upward upon his own imagination and thus satisfied itself in his chimerical nature. It was the journey to Spain: the journey which endures in that marvelous book in which prose, like molten bronze, begins to take the forms of material reality and shows the transpar-

ent colors better than the air itself; it was the journey to Spain that revealed the immortal greatness of Nature to Gautier. Intoxicated with the warm breeze and the resplendent light; enchanted by the oriental magic of Andalusia; seized with a terrifying temptation before the torrents and abysses of the mountain ranges, Gautier then discovered the treasures of reality, and his imagination, inflamed forever with a love for travel, prepared to spread itself (like an overflowing river avid for new hues and reflections) over the glorious immensity of the world.

§ 97. *Travel in the revelation and development of scientific vocations. Montesquieu*

If in the artist's vocation, the great variety of objects that interest him is propitious for the discovery of the one which will succeed in awakening the stimulus for his work, the same thing is true of the kinds of aptitude that fall within the precincts of Science. An object which appears to one in the perpetual change of traveling evokes perhaps the first impulse of attention, curiosity or interest, that will be prolonged in a fecund obsession and will determine a persevering and enthusiastic activity along a definite line of investigation. This particular field may be History. When Gibbon was passing through the Eternal City, he stopped, one day, where the Forum had been; and his contemplation of these ruins, pregnant with memories, gave him the idea of great future work as an historian. When Irving was traveling through the cities of Europe, not yet having discovered how he was to realize a vague literary vocation, he finally came to Castile; there in those dead cities his mind revived the great days of the discovery of America; he seeks traces of them in the archives and monuments and thus he is shown the path by which he will

link his name with the immortality of that glorious period.

But even more than in the revelation of an aptitude, one sees this influence in its development and exercise. Travel is an inexhaustible school of observation and experience: a museum which lacks nothing, a laboratory whose space and equipment are measured by the surface and contents of the world. Having said this, we have yet to add how greatly travel concerns culture and the work of inquiring thought. Even if we pass over the natural sciences in which travel is the means of knowledge without which one could not complete the work of a Humboldt, a Darwin, or a Haeckel; still in the spiritual and sociological sciences, in which sensory observation is not the whole of method (but it is always a very important part), it is easy to imagine to what point the efficacy of observation can be refined in the observer with the infinite diversity of circumstances and acts; the retreat of things behind which passion and habit take refuge; the comparison of the popular or book version with the living fact; and the testing, each day, the developing inductions upon those new touch-stones which Bacon called *the tablets of absence and presence*.

Ancient tradition, which shows how the labor of early historians like Herodotus, of the legislators and educators of nations like Lycurgus and Solon, of the philosophers from Thales and Pythagoras, were preceded by long, tedious journeys, not only indicates a fact which arose from the peculiar conditions of a growing civilization that needed an impulse from foreign lands, but it contains an example more lofty and more essential for spiritual discipline and a solid confirmation of knowledge. The opportunity of this example persists even after printed books bring the investigation of each man to the common herd and when the news of things is transmitted almost instantaneously to the antipodes from the places where

they are produced or thought of. Two illustrious masters of political science, among others who might be cited, gave proof of having a true sense of the value of real, direct observation, that applies to traveling, as a means of originality and sincerity for the thinker: Montesquieu, having perceived a glimmer of the idea for *l'Esprit des lois*, dedicated years of his life to traversing the countries of Europe, before he shut himself up in his castle at Brede to concentrate his thought upon his difficult task. And Adam Smith, whose great work the *Wealth of Nations* was preceded by journeys which he made in the company of the Duke of Buccleuch, accumulating the elements which he was acquiring from his observation of each society, then retired to elaborate this precious harvest in his country house at Kirkcaldy, which saw the birth of that Bible of Utility.

§ 98. *Simple, immutable souls: a single idea, a single impulse of passion. Possible sublimation of these characters*

In the regions of spiritual superiority as well as on levels of vulgarity, there are souls adapted for greater permanence than others—souls which seem to completely elude the force of change and evolution. Once their nature is shaped for good, the sentiment and ideas which form the basis of their life is kept constantly the same in number and kind as well as in intensity, relationship and association. In these souls, the simulated being, no less than the real one, does not recognize any art by which it may adapt itself to different circumstances. They neither increase nor diminish, in the commerce of the world, the patrimony with which they enter it. The passage of time leaves them relatively whole and intact, differentiating a bit between the shades of their character according to the conditions of each age, but never stirring its profundities, as

an iron cupola or a granite wall reflects the changes of light and shadow, without allowing this exterior modification to affect the immutable part of its structure in the least.

This type of soul has its most characteristic and complete manifestation when the tendencies which engross the personality are very few and simple, and when there is among them one which subdues all the rest with a despotic rigor, so that with the successive monotony which arises from that unalterable uniformity there occurs the simultaneous monotony of a psychic entity in which everything is reduced to a few elements, very simply combined. A few sentiments and ideas that last a life-time and converge into a most rigid unity: such is the last analysis of these characters, the very opposites of rich and teachable souls, always in the process of formation, always capable of enlarging themselves and of modifying the relations between their different tempers.

Our natural complexity, which does not grant a soul without some interior struggle and some inconsequence, hinders the perfect realization of this more abstract than human type; but Nature often gives a relative perfection of it: the monolith big enough to make a statue from a single block. Then the will begins to carve this statue by its own government, by the practice of the only kind of education that is reconcilable with the disposition of such characters after they have consolidated and have taken their path in life—the education which consists in restraining, purifying, and systematizing more and more the field of one's own consciousness, making its aspects clearer and firmer from day to day, its ruling principles more tyrannical, its habitual associations more indissoluble. This is quite different from the really progressive education which systematizes and orders, but with the obligation to correspondingly increase the elements which make the superior unity.

It is this concept of perfection that inspired the Spartan ideal, the iron discipline calculated to repress the free and harmonious expansion of human instincts, in the exploitation of a single, idolatrous duty. It is also the immobility of abstinence and resistance that was preached in the portico of Stoa; and it is the idea which, in that race of spirits who represent the austere and ascetic side of Christianity, corresponds to the desire to mould itself in imitation of the absolute permanence of the divine: *I am the Lord, and I change not.*

The grandeur of this character is evident in the person magnetized by a sublime idea or passion; in the superior fanatic; in the illuminated visionary, in the monomaniac of genius: in all those souls who go straight to their goals, treading the tortuous paths of real life as if they were walking through the air. Imagine the indefinite prolongation of two rare moments of your existence; imagine that the alternate succession of both of them should endure and persist, without the solution of continuity, and that these two alone should weave, one the weft, the other the warp of your life. Remember, on the one hand, that moment when the attention of your whole soul is concentrated upon one point; whether it be when you halted your march across a fearful solitude and listened for a vague sound; or when, solving some difficult problem, you reached the peak of reasoning or the greatest tension of thought and interest. And remember, on the other hand, that moment when the blindest impulse of passion bursts forth in you; when a movement superior to yourself, since your will has been silenced by your emotion, unites all your forces; multiplies them, if necessary, with a marvelous intensity, and urges you to defend your good from the wranglings of the world, to attack your hated enemy, to realize, or to make yours the object of your longing.



In no other light can we imagine certain lives: a single object of attention, a solitary idea, absolute mistress of the soul; and, as a natural consequence, a single impulse of enthusiasm and desire, dependent upon that idea for its function and execution. Sometimes the lust for war or religious faith, or a passion for power, or a love of Science or Art, is the absolute power which excludes from the soul whatever does not unconditionally conform to its rule. This does not, even in the most uniform, fatal existences, prevent the appearance of moments rebellious to the order of the whole (this happens to every human being), of germs of diversity and novelty, which might be the point of departure for an amplification and perhaps even for a change of character. But if the will, instead of stimulating these moments, represses and smothers them at birth, and does not find the strength with which to pass from such moments and germs to the course of life, life will maintain its imposing unity to the end. Examples of such concentration of mind are: in religion, Saint Bruno, the founder of the Carthusian Order, as a personification of the ascetic who sacrifices to the unquenchable ardor of his faith not only every other superior kind of sentiment, but the natural instinct of liberty and the rational prerogative of speech; and in war, Charles the XII of Sweden, the conqueror who lives everlastingly upon his horse's back, without ever experiencing the emotion of love, or a temptation to pleasure, or the need for a truce and respite. It must be agreed that the secret of the efficacy of genius is often this enslaving obsession; the implacable force of an idea which has fastened its claws upon a human consciousness. Then, only to that idea does time give opportunities. "My prayers are so continuous," says Saint Teresa de Jesus, "that not even in dreams can I interrupt them." There is nothing that does not somehow confirm the idea and adjust itself to it: everything in

the world is fused and remade according to it, as if by divine fire. For other ideas there is only blindness, ignorance, scorn. It is the ardent passion which usually accompanies enthusiasm for one's vocation, the fervor of the apostle: *Martha, Martha, only one thing is necessary!*

The æsthetic aspect of these characters, if one considers the most eminent of their kind, inclines rather to the sublime than to the beautiful. This perpetual equality, being united to a superior gift of the soul, and the tragic nobility of that merciless immolation of all the passions to a single one, are themselves sublimities, now static and austere, like that of the desert and the mountains: the sublimity of proud, silent abnegation, of the firmest will, free from the impulses of the emotions; now dynamic and violent, like that of a hurricane or a stormy sea: the sublimity of a great passion in motion, that of the soul in a perpetual outburst of love or heroism.

§ 99. *They also have a certain grace. Sappho's apple*

There is also, nevertheless, a certain peculiar charm in this tyrannical absorption of the spirit by a simple, exclusive object which, with its grandeur or its littleness, circumscribes for the former the horizon of its world. When, because of the nature of the soul and that of the object, the latter is capable of enchanting the soul and of calming it, as the blind musician *calms* the air with melodious sound; when the activity which is consecrated to the object develops rhythmically, with gentle undulation, without difficulty or effort; and when amid its eager anxieties there blooms a satisfaction with life, a charm lies in the despotic idea of these narrow spirits. Then the idea recalls that single apple of Sappho's verses, which, having been missed by the harvester because it was up too high, remained alone on a tall branch, itself ab-

sorbing the sap and beauty which it should have shared with its brothers. This is the only thought, the sole object of love, which finds shelter beneath a white linen hood, never ruffled by the breath of the world; or rather the persistence of a curious artificer, who, without eyes or ears for anything else, spends his years engraving a shrine.

§ 100. *Two distinct types of enthusiastic souls. The six pilgrims*

Great is that unity which links all the parts of our existence under one supreme idea; but more beautiful and fecund is it when, in testing the extent of its commanding strength, it is diversified by flexibility and amplitude. Within every communion, every faith, every ideal society, it is easy to distinguish two kinds of sincere enthusiastic souls. There is the inflexible enthusiast: a staunch, austere soul; and there is the man whose enthusiasm assumes the multiple forms of life and acknowledges, generous with its wealth of love, other objects of attention and desire than that which it has chosen by preference. From the former mould are cast the stoic and the ascetic, the Puritan and the Jansenist; from the latter, the broad, communicative and curious spirits, without any diminution of their unquenchable fidelity or their fervid consecration. From one as well as the other, that is, from the persevering, from the enthusiasts, from the believers, and only for them comes the secret of action; but the highest form of perseverance, of enthusiasm and of faith, is the aptitude for extension and transformation without dissolution, without de-characterization.

THE SIX PILGRIMS

Unwritten legends tell how Endymion, not the one who received Diana's favors, but an evangelist about whom his

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tory knows almost nothing, was traveling through the islands of the Archipelago after he had been taught at Corinth by Paul of Tarsus. In a small city of Eubea, his word touched the hearts of six young pagans who became his staunch followers through faith, pure and simple. This growing community lived for some time in the affectionate intimacy by which the life of the early churches used to imitate the bonds of brotherhood. One day, the day of *the Lord*, in the cordial atmosphere of the supper-table, the master and his disciples were struck by a thought which suggested a vocation to them: they would go out to spread the good news, following the path of Alexander. As soldiers of a gentle conquest, guided by the footsteps of the conqueror, they would go where heaven might lead; but they swore that the divine word should not be lost for want of impulse as long as one of its propagators remained alive and free on the road which would become through their efforts, and now with greater purity, glorious once more.

Radiant faith dimmed the temerity of their purpose. Hardly was the idea formulated when impatience for action and glory was already stirring their wills. But as Endymion, the master, had first to complete his journey over the island, they agreed that when the time necessary for this excursion had elapsed, his six disciples should meet him at a neighboring port. From there they would cross the sea to venture upon their dreamed-of mission.

Time passed for them all as if they were in the ecstasy of a divine vision. The appointed day arrived. One bright morning, their bags scantily supplied with bread and fruit, a clear sun ahead of them and within them an enthusiasm that is present when God's hand steers the soul, the six friends set out to meet their master.

Autumn was most mild and opulent. Nature seemed to harmonize her apparel with the happiness of the travelers. It

was as if a blessing were born for them from every thing on the road; feeling it, taking it into their hearts, they rejoiced and spoke of the treasure of their dreams in their jovial conversation. Suddenly, they heard a mournful wail issuing from some nearby bushes. They followed the sound and, seeing a bleeding shepherd, attacked perhaps by wolves, stretched out in the bushes, they hastened to help him. Only one of the six, Agenor, the pale, slender Laconian, with large, thoughtful eyes, had remained indifferent to the cries from the first moment because he attributed them to one of the thousand noises of the wind. He was oblivious to everything except the sublime plan for whose accomplishment they were making the journey. In his impatience to see the shining images of his dreams realized, he had refused to turn from his path to wait for his friends' curiosity to be satisfied. Agenor pressed forward, ever forward, as if driven by the blind force of an enchantment.

Meanwhile, after they had washed and bound the shepherd's wounds with strips of his own clothing, they carried him to his hut, situated a short distance away on a slope where the remnants of his scattered flocks were grazing. Night overtook them while they were still caring for the peasant. At dawn, when the time came to depart, Nearcus, another of the six companions, remained aloof and melancholy, with the air of one who can not bring himself to disclose a painful secret. The others urged him to tell them what was troubling him. "You know," Nearcus said, "that since this incident compelled us, for mercy's sake, to change our course, doubt as to the utility of our undertaking has entered my soul. I heard an inner voice say to me, 'If there is so much and such hopeless grief, so much wantonness and so much impiety near us, where we can make use of the cleansing fire of affection which inflames us, why should we look for an

outlet for our zeal in strange, far-away lands?' I feel asleep with this thought in my soul and I had a dream; just as the apostle saw in his dreams the image of the Macedonian who was calling him, which he interpreted as a summons to go and redeem his people, so the image of this shepherd appeared to me. When I pushed him aside to go on, the junipers and brambles, near which we found him, entangled my clothes and held me back. . . ."

When Nearcus had finished speaking, he embraced his friends, about to continue eastward on their journey, and turned, himself, toward the city—this dream had dispelled the charm of the other one for him.

The company pressed on with unabated enthusiasm. Of the four now composing the group, Idomeneus seemed to be the one who through superiority was taking the master's place. He had been the first to hear and heed the wounded man's cries. He was an Athenian—gentle, intelligent, kind. His face reflected something of that restlessness typical of the intellectual curiosity of a student, something of that tenderness characteristic of the whole-hearted love of a pantheist. But the most profound stamp was imprinted on his face by that sweet dreaminess which came from the immensity of the new faith that had conquered his soul.

Whenever a luxuriant wild-flower appeared at the edge of some nearby grove, Idomeneus would stop to approach and admire its shape and color, to inhale its perfume. Whenever the wind carried the sound of rustic flutes or flageolets from neighboring shepherds' huts, or even when a cicada raised its song, Idomeneus would stop a minute and listen. Whenever a colored pebble shone on the sandy road, Idomeneus with childish eagerness would pick it up and, having polished it, he would carry it in his hands. When, yonder in the distant horizon, a bird or a cloud passed by, or the white triangle of a

sail appeared upon the dark line of the sea, the soul of the neophyte seemed to be irresistibly drawn toward them as he followed the luminous path of his eager gaze. . . .

The sun had already softened its rays when the travelers saw the few houses of a village on the slope of the hill.

On the top, a gigantic, evergreen oak shaded the roofs, gilded by the afternoon sun. Around the tree, they could see a large group of people, an attentive, respectful circle. Inquiring of some of the peasants who had interrupted their work to gather there, the pilgrims learned that it was a wandering singer, a venerable beggar, old and inspired, who traveled every year at harvest time through that part of the island. "Shall we listen to him?" Idomeneus proposed.

Approaching the circle, the four friends stood on tiptoe to see the singer—they caught a breath of heroic antiquity. Everything that belonged to the Homer of legend reappeared in this sweet, majestic figure: his kingly bearing, the long, white beard, the Olympian forehead; a leather bag at his back, a lyre at his waist, a gnarled staff in his right hand, a squalid, muddy dog at his feet. There was a solemn silence. . . . Then, freeing the god already restless in his bosom, the beggar sang; as his trembling hands touched the strings of the lyre, his lips breathed historical and legendary tales, all the things that people remembered, but in his ingenious verses they seemed to regain a freshness and brightness in his invention (just as water settles and becomes clear in an earthenware pitcher). He sang of the birth of the elements in the primal shadows of the majesty of Zeus, of the gods and their sublime battles, of the loves of goddesses and men. He sang of heroic traditions: Hercules and Theseus fighting with monsters and tyrants at the dawning of the world; the ship which seeks the golden fleece, Thebes and its fated people. . . . Afterward, he recalled Achilles' wrath, Hector on the

walls of Ilium; then, the wandering of Ulysses, the charms of Circe and Penelope's chastity. All listened enraptured: Idomeneus, with the expression of one who gazes at an image that evokes in him the memory of another still more beautiful or more beloved; the face of Lucius, one of the three companions, registered first rapture, then anguish. "This divine song," said Lucius, "has made me again feel the beauty of the gods whom we have abandoned. I know my new faith has been mortally wounded by the poet. . . ."

"Your faith was weak," Idomeneus answered, "I feel that mine is magnified and victorious. I keep the sweetness of the song, but I throw away the vanity of the fiction as I should the shell of an almond."

But since Lucius was firm in his decision, Idomeneus, Merion and Adimantus proceeded without him. At noon on the following day, parched with thirst, they caught a glimpse of the look-out of a grange, not far from the road and they made their way toward it. The house was surrounded by a flourishing orchard which luxuriant vines, entwined about the branches of all the trees, adorned with the gold of their fruit. When the travelers arrived, they saw that it was vintage time in the orchard. Some were busy removing casks and getting the press ready. Others filled the air with harsh music and red sparks as they sharpened the sickles that were to be used to cut off the clusters. A group of women were weaving willow hampers and baskets in which to gather the grapes. Everywhere reigned the infectious animation that characterizes labor willingly undertaken: animation that infuses a pleasant stimulus into the workers' sturdy hearts and hands.

Their thirst quenched, the travelers were about to leave when the vintager asked them if they wanted to stay that afternoon to help with the work. He was short of men and had to hurry the vintage so as to finish it on the day set by



his landlord. He added that the necessary laborers would not come from the neighboring towns until the next day and that the time he would gain with the help of the guests would be enough to avoid both delay and punishment.

The travelers, recalling the parable of the few workers for the big harvest, were not indifferent to the healthy temptation of work. And because they were thankful for the hospitality which they had received, they accepted the proposal, and having begun to work, they were not sparing with their strength. Adimantus helped to gather the clusters, Merion to carry them and Idomeneus to press them. The day ended with such marked progress that the vintager, full of joy, abandoned his fears. Then the festival in celebration of the vintage began at Bacchus' altar that was built in the highest point in the orchard, under a crude roof of branches. The laborers gathered around while wine from previous harvests was generously distributed. When they had received their share, Idomeneus invited his men to drink as if they were at a eucharistic feast. Standing a little apart from the others, they raised their cups. Their upturned, ecstatic faces invoked the name of God; and as two of the doves that came to pick up the grape seeds scattered upon the ground flew over them, the Athenian recalled the two invisible cup-bearers and exclaimed with mystic grace, "Irene and Agape!" while a ray of sunlight lit up the bubbling gold of the wine in their cups. . . . Soon afterward, as night was falling, the three friends looked for a shelter under the trees, and since they wanted to start out again at dawn, stretched out to sleep. But in the eyes of Merion, a Boetian, whose face showed the marks of sensuality, the wine had left a touch of warm light. Nearby could be heard the noises of the festival which had summoned the workers to the god's altar. The lighted vine shoots painted the night's shadows with fire. The soul of wine seemed to

wander freely everywhere. In the wind, drunk with the vapors from the wine press, came laughter, songs and the sound of rustic instruments that proclaimed joyful dances. Merion stood up, lifted his cup from the ground, and slipped stealthily away into the shadows.

The revelers had not yet dispersed when his two friends greeted the light of the morning that showed them where their road lay. They did not find Merion near them. "Are you awake, Merion?" they asked the Boetian when they found him stretched out on the ground, belt loosened, garlanded with clusters, like young Dionysus in the shadows of the grottos of Nisa; and he answered them by nonchalantly offering them his cup. Idomeneus and Adimantus departed.

And in the meantime what had become of Agenor who on the first day of the journey had, in his impatience, left the others far behind? . . . Perhaps Agenor had reached the end of his trip, perhaps he was still going forward, forward, as if driven by the blind force of an enchantment.

After walking a short distance, Adimantus and Idomeneus saw a most beautiful plain open before them, through which their road wound and rewound with a delicious volubility, as if attracted by a thousand things at the same time. White villages, waving fields of golden wheat, dense woods, through which flowed the gentle stream of a river and, in the distance, the deep, blue sea. They were walking along absorbed in thought when they smelled the odor of wild apples nearby. Not without some difficulty, they crossed the natural enclosure which bordered the road. The pleasantest grove, the most agreeable rustic copse that can be imagined appeared and enveloped them in the fragrance of its breath. Under the arch of the highest trees, life was weaving a glorious tapestry in which the tenuous light which filtered down from the sky formed a variety of capricious hues with the shadow. Here

and there began narrow, winding paths that seemed to lead to the heart of the wood but soon they found that vigilant brambles and ivy overgrown with corymbs blocked their way. The fruit, still clinging to the branches, was as abundant as that which lay upon the ground and carpeted it with darker hues than those with which the others colored the air. In spite of the fact that it was autumn, besides all this richness there was no scarcity of products earlier than fruit. Everything was virginal, radiant as if still humid with the moisture of life-giving breath. There were no signs that any human foot had ever stepped into that fresh chamber, the retreat of some shy, unknown divinity. As they penetrated further into the grove, Idomeneus felt as if Nature were sweetly embracing his soul—willingly he abandoned himself to her. He admired everything around him with the admiration that moistens the eyes; he seemed to drink the air with delight; there where the leaves formed a deeper labyrinth he forgot his plans; he spoke sweet words to the flowers which perfumed the roadside; he stopped to carve the sign of the cross on the bark of the trees as if on the heart of a catechumen; he recalled Paradise and the land that flows with milk and honey, the cedars of Lebanon and the roses of Jericho, all the rural images of the Gospel. As two wines may be mixed in a cup to weaken one of them, so in him enthusiasm, the intoxication of life (a thing characteristic of his race that came, without his wishing, from the roots of his being), was sweetened with the taste of the new faith, with the memory of a God who had also known how to stop in wonder before the beauty of a bird or a hill or a flower. . . . Idomeneus baptized all that beauty by becoming one with it through love which identifies the soul with things.

Twilight surprised them in the solitude of the mountain, whose sombre shadows seemed to reproach Adimantus. On the

following morning, Idomeneus remembered that they were one day from the end of the journey. When he slung his bag across his back with renewed joy, Adimantus sadly confessed that he did not dare to stand in the presence of the master. . . . The latter, he thought, would surely receive them severely because of their tardiness, if he had not already departed at Agenor's arrival. In spite of Idomeneus' persistence, he said good-bye and, downcast, retraced his footsteps.

Idomeneus went forward alone. He was not long in perceiving above a gently curved shore the white, pleasant houses of a maritime city and the palm trees which beckoned to him with their waving hands. He inquired from the people standing on the threshold of farm-houses or working in the fields if they had seen Agenor pass that way. He realized that they had when they described the fleeting haste, the ecstatic face which they had admired days before in a strange passerby, his pallor, his unfelt or disdained weariness and the indifference with which he continued on his way in spite of the curiosity of the onlookers. "He seemed like a somnambulist," they said.

Just as these tales described him Agenor had reached the end of his journey, without having slackened once since his departure, insensible to fatigue of body, insensible to happenings on the road, insensible to the marvels of nature. Scarcely had he arrived when he fell exhausted at the master's feet—though, luckier than the soldier from Marathon, he did not lose his life. For three mornings and three evenings, from the highest point in the city, as if from a watch-tower, master and disciple watched the direction whence they expected to see the others come, until Idomeneus appeared. They were grieved, but not discouraged to learn from him that it was useless to wait for the others any longer. Endymion put Agenor at his right, Idomeneus at his left and, singing one of

the psalms which tells of the happiness of the traveler, he walked with them toward the sea. Strange clouds counterfeited roads on the confines of the horizon. The sail of the boat which was to carry them palpitated upon the dark, turbulent waves like a great white heart. . . .

And so they departed with the master who symbolized the truth for them, immune to those temptations to which the other disciples had succumbed, either because they were fickle or cowards: Agenor, his enthusiasm firm and austere, the sublime obsession which runs uncontrolled to its end, with indifference and disdain for all the world; Idomeneus, the gracious, full, broad-minded conviction, master of himself in achieving his purpose without any decline in his eternal fidelity—the convert of Athens who, pursuing his inmost vocation, could yet heed the voices of Charity, Art, and Nature, who formed around the great dreams of his soul, from the impressions collected from a varied, colorful world, a cortège of ideas. . . .

§ 101. *The need of a guiding principle in the souls of all of us.  
This principle may be unconscious*

Amid all the necessary transformations in our moral life, there persists, reborn in different forms, manifesting itself in different ways, never enervated or suspended, a dominating power, a guiding force, a principle at once of order and movement, of discipline and stimulation.

In the realm of the will, that force should be a plan to be realized, a means of harmoniously uniting our energies. In the realm of thought, it should be a conviction, a belief, or *rather* (bear this in mind) *a painstaking and truly disinterested persistence that guides our mind on the road to acquiring them.*

Only by means of the positive substitution of both these powers will our liberation from those that dominate us at a given time be effective, because there exists no other means of freeing oneself from one force, except by exerting another opposite force. And only through the function which is appropriate to them shall we tune our life, preventing it from stagnating in the morass of idleness or from wasting itself in the sterile fatigue that comes from meaningless activity.

It would be futile for us, disregarding the infinite complexity of human nature and human destinies, to endeavor to reduce to uniform patterns such a plan and such a conviction; let it suffice for us to ask that they be sincere and worthy of the love that we bear them. And let us not judge the reality and the force of these guiding principles by exacting from them the transparency, the logic, and the assiduousness with which they may appear in the external life of everyone. Still further, they may easily dwell in a soul without crystallizing into a definite and conscious idea, without even the soul's being aware of it—as one who thinks he lives only by the strength of his will may well yield to an attraction; yet this is no reason for depreciating the efficacy and power of these principles. So, while there are people who boast that their acts are a superior finality and that their souls cherish a belief, yet all that is vanity and deceit; for what they deem truth is but a mirage of their imagination, shadows that touch but do not move the springs of the will. There are those too who, perhaps professing indifference or scepticism, carry a safe and well-protected interior light, a hidden ideal force that harmonizes and soothes their life without their realizing it. With the genial adroitness of the unconscious it guides their steps which they think aimless and their hearts which they consider God-less sanctuaries. . . .

§ 102. *The influence of the ceiling. How a guiding principle influences the whole soul, without needing to remain solitary and unique*

They say of Saint Pedro de Alcantara that, because of his humble habit of always keeping his eyes fixed on the floor, he never knew what the ceiling of his cell was like. Let us imagine what might happen to the writer who, through always fixing his glance on his paper, likewise loses the habit of looking at the ceiling of his dwelling; or rather to the mournful man, to the pensive man, to the man bent by sickness or old-age. But in spite of this ignorance of the ceiling under which they pass their lives, in all that they see and perceive around them there is a modification that issues virtually from the ceiling. For, in all truthfulness, it *rules* the room; and it does not become a mere limit or a protection for the room, nor a completion, nor a consummation of its outward appearance, but it is present with tutelary genius in the atmosphere and in things. With its color and polish, the ceiling influences the quality of the light. According to the material of its composition, it increases or tempers heat. By its form and height, it controls sound. The reflections of that mirror, the color-scheme of that tapestry, the tones of that trumpet, all owe to it either intensity or attenuation. It exercises its dominion over the echo raised by voices and over the noise made by footsteps: everything is dependent upon it.

Thus a sovereign idea, an enslaving passion that gain the summit of our soul, influence our thoughts and deeds far beyond their direct and apparent authority. And if they never succeed in completely subjugating all the discords and contradictions that are natural in us, at least they often have a part in what seems most foreign to and remote from their

ends. And although such an idea or passion remain, as often happens, outside of the light of the consciousness, and you do not know which is the ideal force that has the greatest power over you—a new Pedro de Alcantara who does not know the ceiling of his cell; or, though knowing it, you pay no attention to this force, and because you forget it, you think that you have removed it from your mind; as long as it is not torn out by the root, it will constantly influence, it will dominate your spiritual life, even to the point where there will be no relatively permanent thing within you that does not bear its reflection.

Consequently, it is not necessary that a supreme finality to which we consecrate our life should jealously banish from its side others that wish to share with it a little of our love and interest. Let them live; and secretly and delicately the one finality will govern and adapt them all to its whims; and far from having rivals in them, it will have friends and slaves. This we saw happen in the spirit of Idomeneus: bestowing his attention upon the things of the road, all that he felt and admired reminded him of the superior incentive that was carrying him without haste to his destination.

### § 103. *The lover and the omnipresence of his passion*

The faithful image, the exemplary case of this omnipresence of an idea that occupies the center of the soul, is the spirit of the lover who participates in a thousand worldly tasks and struggles and withal keeps his passion always within him. A great love is the very soul of him who loves, centered in a deep, primal harmony; all that is contained in this living whole is bound to that love with a dependence (not to deny expression to another image that demands it from me) like that which links the varied vegetation of a forest to the



amorous earth, from whose bosom gushes forth the juices which soon will transform every plant in accordance with its specific laws of generation. Everything in the forest: the leafy tree-top and the hidden grass, the plant that furnishes balsam and that which produces poison, that which exhales a stench and that which yields perfume, the serpent and the bird—everything in the forest is united and fraternized under the provident maternity of the earth. Thus, every memory becomes associated with a great love—not a hope nor any imagination of the future that is not dependent on it. Every stimulus to action, every object of desire comes directly from it. It dominates our waking and our sleeping—a divinity of night and day; and if there is an act or thought in life that may seem foreign to this concordant unity, an attentive scrutiny will soon find the mysterious relationship; just as when we look at the reflection of a river bank in the water, we see, among other things, a fluctuating form that does not seem to correspond to anything outside, until presently our attention discovers that that comes, like all the rest, from the bank itself.

§ 104. *One vocation suscitates others. The association or subordination of vocations. Cases in which they coexist without being associated*

Upon this aptitude of a guiding power of the soul to enslave, skillfully and indirectly, whatever thrives around it, without having itself to remain solitary and alone, depends the theme that I will call the *association* or the *subordination* of vocations. These types of people in whom the tyrannical and jealous absolutism of a vocation, like that which we noted in Charles XII and in Saint Bruno, freezes and parches the spirit whenever it departs from their one perpetual idea,

are the opposite of those in whom one predominant vocation not diminished in intensity, but quite the contrary, induced precisely by this, promotes and stimulates other secondary vocations, coexisting with them and employing them as its own instruments; thus it is recompensed for the part of strength and attention which it yields to them.

A legitimate universality attained through a complete sufficiency is a very rare privilege; and that false universality, which dissipates in vague and diffuse applications the energies that might be prolific if an unalterable object stabilized them, is like a strike that levels all the excess of thought and of will. But the union of two or even more vocations, when an organic correlation links them together, making them complement or aid each other, is an efficient and felicitous harmony that Nature frequently effects, and it constitutes an interesting subject to which to refer our observation of souls.

There are times when we can not speak of vocations, or the subordination of one to the other, but only of their co-existence. They both live independently, without the bond of essential affinity, issuing from their inclinations and their objectives, or of a relationship that may accidentally disrupt the personal unity of the man who combines them. Each vocation is an autonomous system, a partial soul that manifests itself through acts which the influence of the other cannot affect. We find an example of this in the personality of Garcilaso: though he was inspired at once by the gods of war and the gods of poetry, the poet never remembered that he was at the same time an heroic soldier because he sang, not of glorious epics, but of pastoral scenes and tender loves. Learned men of the natural sciences might also serve as examples: Arago and the chemist Dumas devoted part of their time to action or political propaganda. But, much more frequently

two vocations that coincide in a single soul maintain more or less clear and direct relationships of assistance and collaboration between each other. And even when they do not contribute, or have the means of contributing, to a common objective, but seem to diverge as far as one's work is concerned, these two abilities that one soul embraces generally aid each other, each from its own field, in such an efficient and reciprocal manner that they might be compared to the algæ and fungi contained in the marvellous unity of lichen: an inviolable association, a touching example of mutual aid in the primitive struggle for existence in which the algæ takes from the fungus the moisture that it lacks and needs, and the fungus takes from the algæ the assimilable elements which it could not manufacture for itself. Each aptitude furnishes the other with elements, suggestions, stimulants, and a means of discipline or of expression.

Only in very rare instances is this solidary bond between two abilities, that share the expanse and efforts of a soul, founded upon so perfect a reciprocity and so exact a proportion that it is impossible to determine which of the two is outstanding and dominates. It must not be thought, however, that because of this preference of one, the benefits of the union are for it alone; on the contrary, it is common to both in the same way as there is a common interest in the relationship between master and laborer, or between teacher and pupil. Even in those universal souls, who unite a great many aptitudes, by distinguishing one of them in the absence of a definite, precise vocation, it is not a difficult task to ascertain the fundamental note. Thus, in Don Alfonso the Wise the character of the legislator predominates; in Dante that of the poet; in Raymond Lully, that of the philosopher; in Leonardo da Vinci, that of a painter.

§ 105. *Artistic and scientific vocations which are subordinated to a life of action. Different active vocations that complement each other. The fecundity of the union of two contradictory elements in a complex vocation*

Let us indicate some of these subordinations of aptitudes. The different forms of a *contemplative* vocation, that is, one based on the exercise of the mind and the culture of Science and Art, frequently appear in the spirit of a man of action, as a means for the attainment of the objective that his will pursues, as aids to this preponderant, active vocation. So, great commanders and great leaders of the masses have made use of a certain literary faculty to make palpable the influence of their personality and their example by means of the violent power of words welded on the forge of passion and art; they have earned, themselves, the pedestal of their immortality with the narration of their deeds: Xenophon, Josephus, Julius Cæsar, Bonaparte, Bolivar. So with statesmen, counselors and agitators, the oratorical aptitude which includes written propaganda as another form belonging to our modern agora, has been an efficacious instrument, most characteristic of men of action: Pericles, Lord Chatham, William Pitt, Danton, Guizot, Thiers. . . . Yet it could be said that this gift of eloquent oratory does not show itself in its plenitude without such a union or subjection; because the oratorical gift is not great in itself—it is great as an aptitude subordinated to the supreme art of action, which supplies it not only with its transitory utility, but also with its perennial and peculiar beauty. Literature is subordinated to action in those other politicians who have left the essence of their experience or the history of their accomplishments in books which posterity

reads for their literary merit, as well as for their historical interest: such men as Machiavelli, Antonio Perez, Philippe de Commynes. It is also a subordinate aptitude in those discoverers and explorers who knew how to reflect, in pages which breathe air and light, upon the emotions inspired by glorious adventures and the sight of Nature palpitating in its nudity and purity. This trait can be seen in Columbus, the greatest of them all, whose *Diary* abounds in passages of picturesque and ingenuous poetry.

A similar relationship exists in the spirit of the apostle endowed with a virtue of expression that is now caressing, now flagellating; resolutely he penetrates the limits of Art in order to borrow from its beautiful works wings with which to propagate his doctrine. For centuries this double stream of eloquence has sprung from the desire to spread the true faith and to excite the impulse of charity. Powerful, wrangling and boisterous in Chrysostom, in Tertullian and in Jerome (from which caste of spirits comes the fiery soul of Lamennais), gentle, kind and soothing in Ambrose, Gregory Nazianzen and Basil (who lend the secret of their grace to Fénelon and to Francis of Sales). This aptitude for subordination frequently brings with itself a superior merit and a promise of certain glory both to the priest, who uses eloquence in order to establish and guide a pious congregation, and to any other type of the man of action who is at the same time master of the gift of form. Perhaps when the power of the word to move wills has passed, its beauty appears better, more limpid, more patent—as a broken vial diffuses its perfume.

But it is not only the aptitude of speaking or writing well that is a valuable accessory power in minds exclusively consecrated to works of the will. Other arts are equally capable of acting as auxiliaries. So the faculty of musical composition,

being subordinated to the vocation of the apostle and the reformer, serves it as a precious instrument of convocation and sympathy. This is illustrated by the *Choral-Buch* of Luther, where an emancipated, tuned religious consciousness finds its expression in a sublime language, which two great souls, kindled with an equal flame of candid, original fervor: Ambrose, he of the smooth eloquence, and Gregorius Magnus, gave a norm and a measure to the first stutterings of faith. And if the propagandist spirit of the apostle is contained in the notes of music, it is also contained in color and lines. The apostle-painter is incarnated in the figure of Metodio, the Greek monk, who, when he placed before the eyes of Boris his *Last Judgment*, communicated to the heart of the Bulgarian king the flame of piety that had inspired the artist to paint the picture.

This tendency of the life of action, the religious apostleship, lends itself as a good example of how a vocation that is classified under the will group, suscitates and keeps under its protection and suggestion other vocations of the will or of thought. When the religious vocation assumes an ascetic and contemplative form, it becomes, because of its tendency to inhibit and to stifle every expansive impulse of the soul, a perfect example of a vocation that retires from the world and remains in a monotonous quietude. If, however, it aims toward action and proselytism, then, for the very reason that it directs the most formidable passions and the most imperious disciplines that can subjugate man's nature, it gives nourishment and inspiration to the most diverse activities and secondary vocations that appear in Art, Science or in all the varied forms of active life. A community of believers needs the form of a cult; and so, in order to operate effectively upon the imagination and the sensibility, as if to make tangible the dignity of the tribute it pays to its God, it tends to adopt

the exquisiteness and magnificence of Art: now raising the columns and towers of its temples, now carving its venerated images in stone, now fixing them in color upon canvas, now engraving gold and silver for altar decorations. All these occupations were mingled with the very profession of religion in the monks of the Middle Ages who were also sculptors, painters and goldsmiths, now expressing and communicating their emotion through music, which up to the beginning of the XVth century was also a religious occupation; now finally reverting to the power of words through oratory and the hymn. But, not satisfied with the assistance of Art, this enslaving idea seeks the aid of Science and of the various kinds of action. Thereupon, it aspires to prevail through teaching and thus it determines the pedagogical vocation, which becomes adequate for the continuous, subtle government of the consciousness through the skilled observation of the psychologist and the moralist. The practice of charity is also one of its purposes; this allies it very closely with the science of curing bodily ailments, a science which, subordinated to the ideal of charity, marks the character of the surgeon-monk, the famous Baseilhac. On the other hand, a religious faith tends to expand, to reach remote people, to convert those who live outside the truth which this faith thinks it possesses. It is this that gives rise to two tributary vocations which, like the other vocations of this nature, transcend their immediate, pious aim: the scientific vocation of the philologist and the active vocation of the explorer. The impulse to study pagan or foreign languages in order to penetrate the soul of the infidel—the very impulse that led Raymond Lully, secluded in the region of Mount Rand, to immerse himself in the fountains of Arabian science, and which played an important part in initiating Christian Europe into the knowledge of the Arabic and Hebrew languages—was also the one

that served as an inspiration to the Spanish and Portuguese missionaries, who, following the tracks of the conquerors, brought with them philology, the study of the American languages, and spread and perfected the language of the Asiatic peoples. The vocation of the explorer of unknown lands, identified with the missionary, appears even in modern times in spirits like that of Livingstone, who carried with him to the very heart of Africa, together with the instruments for scientific experimentation, the Bible of the evangelist.

Like the religious vocation, the other manifestations of the life of action, that of the soldier, the sailor and the statesman, frequently take under their protection and tutelage mental activities which are not like the one of literary expression that we have already mentioned. As proof of this we have the works, themselves, in which the sailors, statesmen and warriors have left the testimony of their accomplishments and their experiences. The abundance of observations that treat of physics, of ideas that refer to skill in warfare, and the science and art of politics in the pages of these books, shows that form and the art of the narration is not a predominant factor. Montalembert serves as an example of an illustrious captain whose eminent aptitude in the sciences which are related to the military profession added to the laurels of action those, even more rightfully won, of a theoretical strategist. The same thing can be said of the Archduke Charles: after having bravely resisted Napoleon's army, he left as the fruit of his experience and knowledge two classical works on strategy.

Revolutionary France demonstrates clearly, both socially and collectively, how a passionate effervescence of the forces of action provokes and stimulates, like a subordinated activity, the desire for scientific study, particularly in its application to the utilitarian arts. The Convention, answering the



double need for national defense and a consolidation of the new political régime, maintains in the spirits of a people, electrified by the enthusiasm for liberty, that emulation of discoveries and inventions with which it may place more powerful forces in the hands of heroism (whence developed the signal-telegraph, the first trials of military aërostation and the perfection of the manufacture of steel and gun-powder). While, in a higher and more stable sphere, the new spirit encouraged the reorganization of common instruction and of all kinds of studies; collecting for the different manifestations of this educational task, laid at the disposal of a titanic action, scientific minds like Condorcet's, Lagrange's, Berthollet's and Fourcroy's. Centuries ago, the Romans of Marcellus saw the resistance of the illustrious Syracuse to their conquering armies greatly increase and assume gigantic proportions, as if by the intervention of magic, through the inspiration of a great mathematical genius. Sublimating his science in his love for his country, he repels the ships of the besiegers with his burning-glass, his missiles equipped with hooks and his cyclopean catapults, only to personify the tragic fatality of the downfall by afterward succumbing to the blow of a soldier who finds him absorbed in tracing the lines of a problem on the ground.

Thus, as action makes use of the association of thought, the different forms of an active life frequently become harmonized into composite aptitudes which complement and stimulate each other. Military genius allied with a superior capacity for civil power and an inspiration for making laws shine with great brilliance in Charlemagne, in Napoleon, in Frederick the Great. The perfect will of the saint, reconciled with a gift which, like that of ruling over people, seems necessarily to include some trace of malice or violence, bears the name of Marcus Aurelius in pagan times and Louis IX in the

Christian era. The glory of the mariner and that of the warrior intermingle in men who, like Nelson, win fame in combating wind and ice before they have won it fighting against men; or in those who, like de Albuquerque, having sailed the seas to remote lands, conquer them by the sword. Martial heroism in company with a vocation of charitable and pious love, from which arises the heroism of saints, forms a tremendous paradoxical union of inimical principles, as it were, which, while they mutually embrace, repulse each other and, while they mutually aid, hate each other; but from this contradiction, comparable to the dissonances which give to the music of geniuses a stupendous, paradoxical harmony, arises that kind of sublimity which we admire in the ardent soul of the crusader, in whom a tender piety and the lust for revenge are fused together.

Associations like this, of antagonistic principles that are synthesized and raised to an unexpected unity, often produce in vocations, as in all of the soul's manifestations, efficacious and surprising results. With this we can corroborate the statements that we made in speaking of the complexities and contradictions in our nature, which sometimes, when they bring together elements that never were and never seemed capable of becoming united, give rise to a superior originality, both persistent and fecund. The most noble and significant example that one can cite is that of Columbus. Two of the most different, even antithetic vocations that belong in the category of an active life, have been united in that extraordinary soul: the vocation of a seer, a prophet, an apostle, assured of his mission to enlarge the dominions of his faith and to redeem the sepulchre of his God; and the vocation of an usurer, a tradesman, an avaricious, stern merchant of the Ligurian race one might say, which sent him, bewitched, after the imagined reflections of the gold he had dreamed of

in his visions of the distant Colchis. Perhaps if each one of these stimuli had been separate and alone, neither would have been capable of carrying the fervor of the will to the point where it might bring to maturity the firm perseverance of resolution; but the two united, and the will gained its point.

Common sense is inclined to consider the fervor of a passionate idealism widely distant from the possession of money and the consideration of material interests, because of their natural antipathy. But if one realizes that, even where the disdain and the abnegation of all worldly good appear most pure, it is necessary to appreciate the means for action that wealth furnishes in carrying out a great undertaking and in assisting others in their needs, one can easily conceive of the possibility of a soul inflamed with a great ideal love, who, through this love, acquires neither heroic energies nor elevating inspirations, but puts into execution an able and persevering aptitude for administration and economy. Early Christianity, springing from the bosom of a race in which the most fervent piety and the finest economic sense were united, entrusted to the *deacons* of the church the management and the care of secular affairs in all the communities which it established. These prudent workers, to whom the Christian idea owes the most solid, though less apparent, part of its propagation, were men of ideals and of faith, who added to the services of the supreme vocation of their souls an admirable understanding of practical life, of economy and of equity in the care of public goods and in the distribution of their incomes.

§ 106. *Active vocations subordinated to scientific or artistic ones*

If a preponderously active vocation often makes use of an application to a science or an art as an accessory vocation,

it also yields to the opposite subordination: a preponderously artistic or scientific vocation employs a tendency toward a definite kind of active vocation for its own particular ends.

A heroic will generally accompanies the genius of the poet; the latter, one might say, grasps from the depths of reality by might of his own arm the material that his genius will soon master and mould. From the heroic red copper, fused with the glittering tin of the poet's imagination, came the bronze of Aeschylus' soul and of Camoens' soul, and of *Ercilla's* soul; Koerner, both a hero and a poet, dies gloriously in Mecklenburg, having exalted, like the *Tirteus* of another Sparta, the sentiment of freedom. Not any less effectively does the vocation of heroism inspire the soul of the artist to make the gift of beauty burst forth in a great and lasting work; as when the fever of martial enthusiasm set free in Rouget de l'Isle the inspiration for his immortal hymn. The first impulse of Art can arise from action, just as the first impulse of action can arise from Art: the desire to represent in a perceptible form the records of his campaigns during Napoleon's régime awakens the genius of the painter in Lejeune; and, conversely, the preference for war scenes as objects for painting induces Adolphe Beaucé to embrace the life which will afford him an opportunity to observe first hand the reality which he prefers as the model for his art.

When the instinct of liberty, of adventure, of curious investigation, or of a sailor's vocation brings material and inspiration to a dominant literary faculty it produces a *Maryat*, a Fenimore Cooper; and in our own times and in a higher sphere of art, the enchanter Pierre Loti, the last distilled vestige of the posterity of Marco Polo.

A scientific vocation can likewise find in action an instrument of value or an object of inspiration. To picture this, one has only to compare the sedentary existence of the savant,

secluded in the cloister of the library, the laboratory or the museum, with the life of the savant-explorer, with that of the man who travels for the love of science: La Condamine, Bonpland, Stanley. . . . Their souls possess many of the essential qualities of a man of action together with the faculties necessary for learning: a resolute will, a familiarity with danger, a knowledge of the world, the disposition and the strength for arduous, painful marches, and sometimes sublime heroism and the abnegation of sacrifice. In a similar way, when the vocation of the art of medicine links itself by its very purpose with the activity and customs of a military career, it produces a military surgeon like Percy. He associated himself with the armies of the Revolution and the Empire until the very day of Waterloo, to carry forward, along with the battles of ambition and hate, and with no less vigilant nor less rapid tactics, the battle of Humanity and Science.

§ 107. *The subordination of an artistic vocation to a scientific one, and of a scientific one to an artistic one. The association of different types of artistic vocations. The vocation of an interpretive art united with the corresponding creative art. The mutual aid which the creative aptitude and the critical mind lend to each other*

Even without an alliance with action, the different mental aptitudes themselves can form complex vocations, in which each aptitude, according to the aim that predominates, furnishes either the fundamental or the accessory factors.

For the scientific genius the added faculty of a literary aptitude is a most precious instrument with which truth through the medium of a luminous exposition becomes clear and communicable and gains a distinct, exact notation of all the

shades of thought. We find this in Galileo, in Buffon, in Humboldt, in Claude Bernard, in Pasteur. . . . If literary conditions rise to a higher level and include those essential virtues of imagination and sentiment that invade the domains of poetic creation, we have as a result such spirits as Renan or Guyau; in them the understanding of the truth and the gift of realizing beauty permeate and absorb each other in such a manner that they seem to form one aptitude: a compound aptitude, in which it would be difficult to discern the part that belongs to each specific faculty. It might then be said, to use chemical terminology, that there is not merely a mixture, but a combination between the two. Who could separate in the *Vie de Jésus* or in *l'Irreligion de l'Avenir* the work of the thinker from the work of the artist?

Similarly, the presence of all or some of the characteristic faculties of the savant, completing a spirit in which those of the poet prevail, imprints its peculiar stamp upon those souls that vie as much as is possible in times of cultural plenitude with the character of early poets, with the revealer and the educator: the Homers and Valmiki of refined, complex ages—from Lucretius, in whom the sap of ancient learning blossomed into a splendid magnolia, to Goethe, who achieved originality and invention in science, and Schelling, whom I deliberately consider a superb poet of prose, rather than a philosopher. The inspiration of Leopardi, evoking in its integral purity the most intimate beauty of antiquity, and expressing in its transparent forms the bitterness of an individual and personal philosophy, which occupies quite a unique place in the history of ideas, could only come as it did from a spirit that belonged both to an eminent philologist and a metaphysician of genius. The science of the past, subordinating itself to intuition through an artistic medium, forms the peculiar aptitude of historical novelists, like Walter Scott, Freytag and

Manzoni. If the order of this subordination is inverted so that strict and verifiable truth becomes of prime importance, it becomes the science of history as it is conceived and written by historian-colorists: Thierry, Barante, Michelet. But with this type abstractly considered, be it science that is aided by art, it more frequently happens that, in the concrete work and in the faculties of the author, art prevails over the other kind of knowledge. Nor is there any need for the production of the writer-artist to be applied to one of these intermediate forms between Science and Art in order that his science, if it is deep and powerful, may reach the beauty that he creates, and circulate in it like an invisible current of blood that gives nourishment and warmth to a beautiful body. What a wealth of culture the refined wisdom of a Flaubert or a Mérimée must have contributed to the most persistent realization of that ideal of beauty founded on truth, precision and limpidity which they both pursued! . . . The manner in which literary naturalism dreamed of identifying Art with Science was only a transitory delirium, because it betrayed an ignorance of the inviolable and essential autonomy of the artistic processes. But any relationship is possible and fruitful if it is contained in the depths, in the sediment of the spirit, where the work sinks its roots and leaves the sacred mystery of æsthetic generation free.

The concurrence of a scientific attachment to a single limited objective with a poetical inspiration that is applied and bound to the same sole objective, in such a way that both make a simple and graceful harmony, like the fruit and the flower that one slender branch upholds, can be seen in the simple duality of the spirit of Rodrigo Caro, the archæologist. Having finished removing the dust from the Roman ruins on the banks of the Betis, he was able to sing immortally to Fabio

of the sadness of the *fields of solitude*, where the *famous Italica* once was.

In the sculptor and the composer, as well as in the writer and poet, a background of extensive and varied knowledge, that expands beyond the technical side of culture in a wide perspective of ideas which the artist regards as visions, is a mine that enriches the imagination, a rock upon which it acquires security and firmness. Furthermore, in the theoretical knowledge of each art, that complements and makes mature the mastery of practice, there are more direct and lasting links with the aptitude for a definite kind of science. Thus no one can determine precisely where the bounds of pictorial anatomy end within descriptive anatomy, nor up to what point the perfect dominion of the latter is capable of strengthening and completing the vistas that the first reveals, when, as in Leonardo da Vinci, the study of the human form, colored by the genial observation of the painter, depends upon that more profound and more analytical comprehension of our body that it required through experiments and investigations (for which it deserves a place among the precursors of Vesalius). Albrecht Dürer also mastered a basis of culture that goes beyond the strict limits of a painter's discipline and enables him to write with discretion and originality about geometric measures and human proportions. The architect-artist is, through the very nature of his position, the executor of a useful work to which both geometry and mechanics contribute; and for the completion and perfection of the applied scientific part of his work, he employs his intuition of beauty. In theoretical music, which frequently embodies as an accessory and even predominant aptitude the faculty of creation or interpretation, a mathematical intelligence is a precious element, which has a natural affinity and sympathy



with an art that relies entirely upon the numerical relations of sounds and intervals. Thus, a Choron is an eminent mathematician, and in antiquity, from Architas of Tarentum and Pythagoras up to Boethius, it was the work of a mathematician to try to figure out the harmony of sonorous intervals. Astronomy is a mathematical science; both Herschel and Ptolemy understood music, and Herschel was a performer who made it the vocation of his youth.

On the other hand, two aptitudes: one, scientific; the other, artistic, that coexist in one spirit, even though they have no permanent or organic relationship that comes from real and tangible connections between the two, can unite accidentally and derive benefits thereby. The artistic vocation interests and stimulates the spirit for a task to which it may apply the enlightenment of its science; and this has been the origin of more than one glorious discovery and more than one efficacious investigation. Antiquity attributes the first determination of the laws of perspective to the genius of Aeschylus, who, moved by the desire to ascertain the effect and the propriety of the theatrical settings of his works, must have called attention to that side of mathematics. Van Eyck, the great Flemish artist, to whom in all probability the invention of oil paintings belongs, was a scientist; he was induced through the suggestion of his dominant faculty for painting to employ his knowledge of the rudimentary chemistry of his times in the search of a process that would give brilliance and gradation to the strokes of the brush. Similarly Daguerre, who discovered a way of retaining images in the camera obscura, was a man in whom the vocation and the aptitude of a scientific experimenter and an interest in artificial reproduction of forms (which was appropriate to his artistic nature) were united. In the memories of the great Cuvier there is a eulogy of the learned works of Bennati, the Mantuan doctor;

he possessed a most beautiful voice and the passionate vocation of a singer, but he fixed his physiological science upon that object which showed him his artistic faculty, upon perspicacious investigation of the mechanism of the human voice.

If we pass from the relation between Art and Science to that of the different arts among themselves, always thinking of the possibility of this association within the same spirit, the frequency of these associations increases. We cited examples of the union of the three plastic arts in one artist when we spoke of the universality of an aptitude. Painting and sculpture become reconciled sometimes in those who above all were painters, like Paul Dubois; again in those who were by preference sculptors, like Millet. Yet, the easiest and commonest partnership is that of the two arts of stone: architecture and sculpture. They were not separated until the modern revival of Art was far advanced, when the statue of unity was emancipated from the architectural organism. Even after this emancipation was accomplished, they united their cultures in such artists as Jacopo Sansovino, Ammanati and Giovanni da Bologna. The concurrence of an inspiration for plastic art with a musical one is a more exceptional and dangerous case, as it requires the marriage of two forms of the imagination that are antithetical in certain respects. We find them together, nevertheless, in the universal spirits of the Renaissance, although with a very great disproportion between the aptitudes, in such renowned painters as Michael Angelo, Leonardo and Verocchio. And even among the modern plastic artists there are some who, like Delacroix and Ingres, had a secondary musical aptitude, which, if it had had the advantages of the preferred vocation, would perhaps have been more than mediocre. It is difficult to conceive how such divergent forms of the imagination could be of service to each other or ex-

change stimuli and suggestions; but if one considers that in an energetic, plastic imagination the impressions of sound, like any other kind of sensation, sentiment or idea, are naturally inclined to suggest visual forms, it is easy to admit that musical emotion, being interpreted in the painter's soul through physical representations, which express more or less personal and arbitrary relations between the sensations of sight and those of hearing, suggests and inspires motives for painting; or that, reciprocally, the plastic form, with its accepted preference, tends to reflect itself in the painter, who is also a musician, through the definite range of sounds. It is opportune to recall, in reference to this, that one of the artists who embrace both extremes of imagination, Salvator Rosa, created both a picture and a melody under the same name of *The Witch*.

More often do the gifts of the plastic artist and those of the poet dwell together; and this cohabitation assumes a co-operative and brotherly form when both faculties of the spirit lead by different paths to the same end (*ut pictura poesis*. . .). Either poetry is confined to the imitation of the physical world, as in the idyllic Gesner, whose poems are a verbal translation of his pictures; or else the poet's power of expression is consecrated to the devotion of another art, in order to celebrate its greatness or to coin its precepts in golden verses. Thus it appears in Pablo de Cespedes, one of the most gallant figures of letters and art of Spain's great century: a painter who, exclusively or preferably, dedicated his concomitant poetic aptitude to singing the glory and the beauty of the art of color. Artists who, like Fromentin and Guillaumet, had besides the gift of coloring canvas the gift of artistic expression in words, converted the pen as well as the brush into an instrument with which they might imprison lines and colors on their retinas. Poets like Victor Hugo

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and Bécquer applied an accessory aptitude of drawing, with true inspiration, to interpreting and to translating in the plastic form the conceptions of their poetic imaginations.

A literary faculty and the musical one, combined in a in a single personality for a work in which both participate, has a magnificent realization in the spirit of Wagner. Achieving through this duality of his genius a perfect concord between musical expression and dramatic invention, he established the type of this two-faced drama, whose perfect manifestation cannot be reached without the conformity and confluence of both inspirations, after their birth in one mysteriously inspired soul. Arrigo Boito, with *Mephistopheles*, his double work of music and poetry, is another illustrious example of this association of the two aptitudes. United in a simpler and more candid harmony in the light form of the *song*, music and verse usually come from a single breath of the soul: the canticles and the *lieder*, for instance, to which Hans Sacha gave both music and words, or the glorious hymn of which Rouget de l'Isle is doubly the author—as if for a moment the arts of sound regained their elemental, primitive brotherhood, reverting to the time when from the lyres of men like Terpander, Simonides and Timotheus, melodious sound and rhythmic words were born from a single *afflatus*.

Sometimes, coexisting in one personality but not combined in a common work, the musical and the poetic faculties unite through sympathy and efficacious inspiration, like those that often illumine the fantastic tales of Hoffmann. A writer rather than a musician (although he was one of merit), he frequently takes for his fictions, subjects and motives that he owes to his profound feeling for the infinite suggestion and, as it were, the taumaturgic power of music.

The florescence of more than one literary genre in the

vocation or aptitude of the same person occurs more often than the absolute devotion of a writer to a single genre. If one bears this in mind, almost constant relations will become patent. One can hardly name a great poet who has not also been a notable prose writer. One can hardly find a dramatic poet of the first rank who has not in him a more than mediocre lyric poet. Oratorical writers (if one looks for them on the heights of truly superior eloquence) doubtlessly number most among them men who have lacked a style capable of liberating itself from the tutelage of oral expression.

In those arts that require, because of their very nature, the aid of another interpretive art to display the beauty they create, not seldom does it happen that the aptitude for interpretation concurs with the creative aptitude. Great composers excelled also as musicians: Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn. . . . Great dramatic poets: Plautus, Shakespeare, Molière, were likewise actors; and Molière was an actor of genius. Besides in dramatic poetry, this aptitude to actively interpret one's own fictions (an aptitude which very early was, perhaps, identified with poetry and even one with it in the essential inspiration of the poet) recurs sometimes in the author of fictional narratives. Dickens' public lectures on his novels were marvels of declamation and mimicry and of Alphonse Daudet they say that he had an exquisite grace in recounting the scenes which he imagined, with all the color and breath of life. The comic faculty, as the dominant or substantive one, and that of dramatic production, as the accessory one, were met in the spirit of Garrick; and in the soul of Paganini a superb capacity for execution, as a *virtuoso*, outshines his positive genius as a composer.

A critical mind and the gift for propaganda or polemics, acting as aids of literary creation in order to support the doctrine or the methods which the latter exemplifies, have

been given respectively to reflective artists like Goethe, and to impassioned innovators like Zola. And an outstanding critical faculty usually brings with it the related gifts of the poet, which provide the bow for its arrows of precept and satire, as we see in the precise, authoritative verses of Boileau; or with which it may cultivate in its own garden a flower of beauty that in Macaulay and in Sainte-Beuve is transcendent with the concentrated essence of *The Song of Lake Regillus* and some of the *Consolations*.

How many volumes of the professional critics and of doctors of æsthetics might be exchanged for those fragments of criticism, born of a conscious reflection upon one's own productions: like the *Letter on the Dramatic Unities* of Manzoni and the prologues to Alfred de Vigny's *Cinq-Mars*, to Victor Hugo's *Cromwell* and to Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastic Sonnets*, or any of Carducci's pages on theory or polemics!

It is a common prejudice to think that the gift and the activity of practice in any order of beauty inhibits or takes strength away from the aptitude for theory. For then the creative artist has words with which to teach his art and write the history of it (a superiority which his initiation into and intimacy with the secret of the art have given him over others) and besides that second sight, which the fervent love for the object lends to every sort of knowledge. So it is that theoretical intelligence and the sensuous appreciation of the beautiful owe invaluable treasures to the personal contribution of artists. Dictating, like Alphonso the Wise, the laws of his kingdom, Leonardo da Vinci produces his *Della pittura*, which Rubens was to emulate in his dissertation on the same subject. On the pages of painters like Vincente Carducci or Palomino, Reynolds or Lebrun there are enduring observations, instructions and judgments on Art, which if they had no positive value, had at least an historical one. We still read

the lives of artists of the brush in the books of Vasari, himself a painter; and there remains much of interest in the theories on the art of music, evolved by musicians and composers: from Salinas and Rameau to Schumann and Liszt. The revolutionary work of Wagner rests no more on his marvelous creations than on his voluminous writings of propaganda and doctrine; and at the same time Berlioz, who established the models which were to modify the trend of music in France with his symphonies and operas, was maintaining one of the most animated, interesting and fecund movements of ideas that art criticism has ever witnessed, with his reviews in the *Journal des Débats*.

It is just as easy to encounter the reciprocal subordination of aptitudes: the theoretical faculty, as the capital talent and the productive faculty, as the complementary aptitude. Most of the great theorists of music, and some quite pre-eminently, had the ability to write it: like Matthesson, Martini, Choron, Fétis and Castil-Blaze. Many noted plastic artists were writers who have best taught and judged color and line—we have only to cite Gautier, Delecluze and Charles Blanc. In Viollet-le-Duc the illustrious writer on architecture and archæology shares glory with the restorer of Gothic monuments. The inspired sermon of Ruskin, who has given body to the most original, most fervent, most religious enthusiasm for Art that has been spread through the world in modern times, is the word of a painter.

§ 108. *Permanent associations between different scientific aptitudes. Purely historical or accidental associations. Theoretical science and the faculty for its practical application*

If we seek the complexity of an aptitude within the different methods and objectives of knowledge which compose the

broad scope of science, we shall find no fewer vocations frequently united by an organic and fecund tie.

Beginning with the most synthetic and elevated scientific aptitude: that of the philosopher, we could hardly mention one example of superior metaphysical capacity which has not been accompanied by an original and inventive knowledge; or, at least, by a vast and profound proficiency in some particular kind of science. This foundation, as we might call it, may be mathematics as it was in Plato, Descartes, and Malebranche; or the natural or biological sciences as it was in Hartmann, Spencer and Bergson; if it does not move indefinitely, with the universality of an Aristotle or of a Leibnitz, among the most diverse departments of science. In time a specific science, dominated by a powerful force of synthesis and transcendental thought, involves an aptitude for philosophic generalization, which enables a Lamarck to soar from the patient labor of the naturalist, to a conception of the origins and the transformations of life upon the world; and a Vico, from the knowledge of historical facts, to the idea of the norms which the development of human societies follows.

The mathematical genius sometimes manifests himself in his exclusive and isolated field of abstraction, without giving lines and numbers any interest other than the one which they have *per se* for those who understand and love them; but no less frequently does he search, after exercising himself in that field, for a road to concrete reality; and so he passes first to astronomy, to the heights of a Huygens, a Laplace and a Leverrier, to measure the movements and distances of heavenly bodies; then to physics, in order to augment, in the examination of the properties of bodies, the fund of experimental knowledge. This last case is a patent demonstration of two heterogeneous aptitudes that unite and tend in efficacious



companionship toward a single finality. Most of the great observers of nature to whom we owe the most valuable triumphs in investigating her laws and in controlling her forces, from Galileo and Newton to Helmholtz, were spirits in whom the experimenter supplemented the mathematician.

The observation of the material world has for its purpose either the formulation of general laws that regulate things and beings and from which is born the wisdom of the physicist, the chemist and biologist, or the concrete study of things and beings themselves, describing and characterizing them, as the geographer and the naturalist do. These different types of observation are so inter-related that no one of them can be considered absolutely unrelated to the others; and their objective relations are often reproduced subjectively in the vocation and the aptitude of the sage. The naturalist-geographer, favored in both respects by virtue of linking two departments of science intimately connected, is personified in the great figure of Humboldt. At others times, the concrete study of living or inorganic bodies will tend to be complemented by the study of the abstract properties of bodies, and the naturalist will become in turn a physicist, like Reaumur; or the naturalist will rise from the specific knowledge of the different organisms to a general consideration of organic life, and will become from this moment a physiologist, like Heller or Spallanzani. Even with mathematical abstraction, which is separated from the intermediate field of the physical sciences, the aptitude of the observer in the concrete natural sciences may sometimes be associated immediately and efficaciously—therefore a mineralogist like Haüy needed the learning of the geometrician to make his discovery of the laws of crystallography. If the relation is applied to the three sciences which through *antonomasia* we call “natural,” the bonds are so intimate, in objective and *modus operandi*, that

passage from one to another is even more easy and logical. A botanist like Linnæus extends his genius for classifying to the limits of zoology and as a mineralogist promotes the study of crystals; zoologists like Buffon and Cuvier gloriously embrace the bounds of geology. The special field of observations of the physicist and of the chemist, after alternating in men like Gay-Lussac, become identified in the experiments which caused Berthelot to convert chemical reactions into problems of molecular mechanics; and with this he laid the foundations of a complex science that shares the objectives of the former two. And if the task of the chemist is bound on one side with that of the experimenter in physics, on the other it is bound and involved with that of physiology and biology according to what was proved in the laboratory of Lavoisier; and what was later corroborated by the works of Berthelot himself, on organic chemistry; and even more patently by the great work of Pasteur who had to begin by being an eminent physicist, in order to leave an indelible stamp upon experimental physiology and medical science.

Scientific vocations of an even more ostensible complexity stand upon those very spacious frontiers between the spiritual and sociological sciences on the one hand, and the physical and natural, on the other; frontiers that the prodigious labor of the last century found almost virgin soil, from which it reaped a rich harvest; now seeking in the facts of biology a new light for the social sciences; now closely uniting psychological studies with the experiments of physiology; now tending to modify because of the connections between the moral and the physical, the concept of crime and punishment; now, finally, causing the limits of the science of the past to retrocede by means of the establishment of prehistoric archæology (which, as a result of its relation to the objectives of the geologist, has been the preferred study of naturalists).

Besides the persistent relations between different sciences, when from the very temper and nature of both it follows that they can be associated for a common end, there are also accidental relations arising from an historical source, which, at a definite time and place, cause the vocation of one science to include necessarily or advantageously that of another. Thus, at the time of the renaissance of classical culture and even until the emancipation of scientific thought from the yoke of antiquity was far advanced, medical science was a tributary of philology. The duality of aptitudes, which soon becomes an exceptional privilege in the spirit of a Littré, then appeared organically established in men like Cornaro, Foe, Leonicello, Montano and Guido Guidi. Every learned doctor in those days had to be a philologist, taking root, as the knowledge of law and the precepts of its discipline took root in the dominion of the languages in which the authority of the ancients spoke, rather than in observation and experimentation. Another accidental linking of philology with the natural sciences (for its association with the anthropological and historical sciences is persistent and quite evident) is manifested in the teacher Linnæus and the precursor of his glory: in Olaus Celsius who combined his mastery of philology and his knowledge of botany in a work which required as much of these two dissimilar talents as the separation and classification of all the plants named in the Old Testament.

The accidental relation which establishes in the vocation of one man a fortuitous coincidence of two different fields of scientific knowledge, although they are not objectively capable of being associated intimately and permanently, can suggest the plan of thus uniting them, and leading to the trial of an artificial and forced union, which will be destroyed as soon as the merely personal reason that maintains it disappears. But even so, it is rarely that this ephemeral union

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does not leave some precious remembrance, some felicitous suggestion, some positive result. A mathematician of great worth like Borelli, guided by the secondary vocation of a physiologist, attempts to link discipline, so different in nature and method as the one which deals with the abstract order of quantity and the one which studies the concrete order of life; he fails fundamentally, but he leaves behind him ideas that prevail and are capable in a way of being related with the objective of mechanics, like muscular movement.

An association of aptitudes which frequently is realized is that of the theoretical understanding of a science with the faculty of its application in practical inventions, or in the exercise of some one of the utilitarian arts which grow from the different branches of human knowledge. Halfway between those spirits who are outstanding in scientific speculation exclusively, developing theories only to prove the truth, like Copernicus; or instituting a method without having the aptitude to apply it, like Bacon; and those in the opposite condition, strictly utilitarian, who never use generalities and laws: a Watt, an Edison, a Morse—halfway between these stand those others who have both faculties: Archimedes, who, with the religious candor of a priest of pure and ideal Science, was accused of having lowered the loftiness of truth by applying it to the accomplishment of that which is useful, as well as Galileo, Pascal and Huygens. Nothing can more convincingly prove the truth of what we have said about the mutual advantages of an organic correlation of aptitudes: that it does not benefit only the greater and more dominant one, nor only the smaller and more submissive one. Knowledge, both theoretical and fundamental, gives light and inspiration for practice and utility but these, in turn, hasten to confirm and fix that knowledge by throwing it into the crucible of exacting experience. An obvious example of this

is physiological science which has been developed along with medical science: it owes its greatest acquisitions and advancements to the constant and potent stimulation of the interest in its uninterrupted application. The physiologist and then the biologist are, historically, doctors who have emancipated and made abstract some of their studies. Even in the absolute doctor it is necessary to differentiate between the man who reproduces and reconciles in his aptitude what there is of science in his chosen profession (as a subdivision of physiology) and what there is of art in the exclusive theorist; and the man who shines exclusively in the glimmerings, the intuitions and the semi-empirical dexterity of the practice of so conjectural and so uncertain an art. Chemistry, no less than physiology, was utilitarian from its beginning, the heir of the lustful dreams of alchemy; and men like Lavoisier, Guyton, and Priestley had, together with their science, an inspiration for its useful application. Experimental physics too, associated at first with spirits exclusively or preferably speculative, comes to be, since the last century, the preferred objective of spirits both practical and utilitarian. As for mathematics and mechanics, they always had, besides essentially speculative minds, those devoted to their application to the needs of society: now cutting and building with stones, now damming waters, now guiding the course of ships. But in the mathematician as well as in the physicist, in a thousand cases, the faculty for theorizing is linked with that of its application; of this we have already given examples headed by the great name of Archimedes. Less frequently does one find a similar relation in the spirit of the naturalist, because the utilitarian (which theoretically would come under his dominion in the cultivation of land and the use of its gifts) almost always develops apart from disinterested and superior learning.

An interesting accessory faculty to the knowledge of a

special kind of science is the gift of teaching it; the virtue of sympathy and communication which constitutes the genius of a master and which through its own substantive value sometimes determines and characterizes the superiority of a soul more than his learning. So that it becomes a true, dominating faculty, as it is manifested in the professors who, not speaking now of letters or of history, where eloquence comes naturally, but in the chair of medicine, elevated didactic oratory to the efficacy and brilliance which make famous the names of Fourcroy and Philip Pelletan, eminent without a doubt for the quality of their learning, but more for their teaching in which they passed it on.

Even aptitudes of less apparent value and transcendancy are often precious in the soul of the savant, to complement him or to facilitate his way.

The skill of a designer, as an aptitude subordinated to a kind of investigation which requires, in order to communicate its results, the objective medium of the press, glows in naturalists and anatomists who, like Camper, Andebert or Lyonnet, were at the same time famous engravers.

The ability to construct by their own hand the instruments and mechanisms adequate for a method of observation or experimentation, which the principal aptitude needs, was always a humble and officious servant in the most lofty scientific discoverers: from Roger Bacon to Newton; from Pascal to Franklin, from Galileo to Humphry Davy.

#### § 109. *The coexistence of a true vocation and a false one*

Opposite to these efficacious complexities is one in which there coexists a true, fecund vocation with another false and sterile. Now there is no coöperative association, no vital bond, as between algæ and fungi; there is reproduced here,

rather, the union of the parasite, incapable of bearing fruit, with the tree from which it takes away the sap (for the sap of every aptitude is attention) without compensating in any way for the evil it causes. In Napier the delirious exegete lives with the mathematical genius; and in Lamartine the glorious poet with the vain politician.

It is not less important to separate from the association or subordination of vocations the case in which the only kind that really exists induces the adoption, without an impulse that comes from the heart and responds to the consciousness of a new aptitude, of a professional status—a direction of activity determined only by the advantages it offers, by accidental and external circumstances, for the free development of the true inclination. Such a thing often came to pass when the cloister, or the sedentary, peaceful life of the clergy were the propitious mediums in which meditative and studious souls were inclined to take refuge. Copernicus took the orders upon his return from one of his youthful journeys perhaps less because of religious fervor, than to enjoy the peace it gave him for the rest of his life to contemplate a real and sensible *heaven*. And as it happens also, to cite another example, when Saint Sebastian, the martyr of Narbonne, is inflamed by the charitable vocation and becomes a soldier in Cæsar's army, he does so only to be in the position to lift his protecting hand in behalf of those who are the object of Cæsar's persecution.

§ 110. *Another point of view concerning the coexistence and association of vocations*

From another point it would be worth while to study the relation between two vocations which coexist in one soul by comparing them not in regard to the assistance they lend

each other, but in regard to the appearance and style of their work, of the acts into which they are translated.

However dissimilar they may be when one considers them abstractly, and however separately they may develop, one must note in the two activities between which a consciousness divides its attention, regarding them according to the personal manner in which they act and by which they are characterized, similarities that show that both aptitudes are subordinated to the organic unity of a personality in which certain traits of the soul are dominant. Thus the wise artist will give to the works of his art or his science these common qualities: an acuteness of observation, a laborious *modus operandi*, prolixity and beauty; or, on the contrary, momentary inspiration, an intuitive *modus operandi*, a boldness of conception. But is this relationship of similarity so constant and so certain that it can be converted into a law?

Sainte-Beuve, speaking of Pascal, hinted at an interesting question: can it not be said that in this great spirit the geometrist manifests some of the same qualities of genius as the writer, unlike D'Alembert who stamps his mathematical works with characteristics that are somewhat opposite to those he reveals in his literature?

§ III. *The disciplinary virtue of every ideal power that governs us*

An ideal power, an inner inspiration; a sentiment, the idea which grows on sentiment; love, faith, noble ambition, enthusiasm; a magnetic pole by which our spirit is orientated: these are worth as much to us as the end to which they bring us (and sometimes more), because of their virtue of disciplining the soul; because of their gift of government and their instructive efficacy.



Although their work shows no exterior development in action, and though they may die, buried in themselves like a dream, their work is most real and fecund.

When your soul lacks a central force to give tone and direction to your life, your soul is a defenseless bulwark and the thousand enemies who continually keep their eyes upon its will finally capture it—then they will appear before the reality which surrounds you as the very depths of your own personality. The enemies that come from without are only vulgar temptations, hidden behind the appearance of things. The will of him who has no love or aspiration upon which he may stand safely, as upon a diamond base, is liable to yield to the influence which first, or with greater artificiality solicits it upon the roads of the world; so his will becomes his ephemeral master, substituted with the sun of each day by another and still others. His soul is like Shakespeare's *Titania's*, when, while dreaming, her eyelids were rubbed with the herb which had the power to inspire her with love for what she might first see on waking. It knows not the liberal and reasonable power of a master sentiment that would rule it like a well-unified Republic; it suffers itself to be the pasture for the ambition of a multitude of strangers. Those enemies which lurk in the ambushes of the world join forces with those that the will hides within itself, with those domestic enemies: our vicious propensities, our ill-restrained vices, the first impulses of our nature. It is easy to see how contradictory and complex (and always how miserable to some degree) are the contents of a soul. Only the authority of a directing idea which holds liberty within its bounds, although without tyrannical jealousy or excessive love for itself, can reduce to a unity the multitude of so many opposing forces. Lacking this guiding idea, nothing but chance and disorder can come to one who usurps his power from the boisterous crowd; and it is

because of this chance and disorder that evil prevails rather than good.

As in a practical sense it has been said with precision that our progress is nothing more than a continual effort to avoid ruin, so, as far as the soul is concerned, a firm will is a constant preventative of deviation, of a temptation of discord, of guilt. An ideal power which inspires us fixes the norm for that function of our will, and it is often like the Socratic demon that dwelt in the soul of the philosopher, rather because of its prevention of things which did not accord with its law, than because of its initiative. Wherever we may choose this ideal power, and even when it leads us toward something vain, equivocal or unjust, merely within its power to discipline and order us, is already contained a moral principle which makes us superior to disorientation and confusion, because morality is always order and where there is order, there is morality.

§ 112. *The discipline of love and the quality of the object upon which love depends*

There is related to what I have said concerning the disciplinary virtue of an interior power which dominates us a proposition full of doubts: which is more valuable for the better governing of life, the absence of love, or a love devoted to one who is not worthy of inspiring it?

As a first consideration of the matter, we might agree that love has the property of assimilating the lover and the beloved, the former being the original, the latter the copy. The virtue of love in itself, then, is neither bad nor good, but relative to the quality of the object upon which it fixes its gaze; according to the object, the virtue of love will vary from the loftiest of noble influences to the lowest of the causes

of depression and self-abasement—between the heights and the depths, because in proportion to what the lover is and how much he needs of his beloved to complement himself, so does he remake and instruct his beloved with the most subtle and powerful of forces. Such a condition of the soul as the beloved desires in her lover, either to use for a special purpose, or merely for the pleasure which is found in it, she discovers in him, or creates in him. In this way the suggestion of love returns to the lover in the magic guise of the soul who excites it. In the poetic expression of love a very common sentiment is the longing to recast and transform oneself, in order to become that which has the right of greater intimacy with the person one loves, or that which offers the means of doing her greater good or of rendering her a more unique, a more fervent homage. "I should like," says the lover, "to be the air which drinks your breath; the humble flower which your foot treads upon; the sunbeam which adorns you; the distant star on which you fix your gaze in the ecstasy of your dreams." . . . The natural aspiration of one who loves is to be loved; the lover sighs to be acceptable. But as amiability which becomes mutual depends on the appearance and sentiments of the beloved object, for each object of love there will be a unique amiability; and from the nature of the object which one has to please, this amiability takes its inspiration and model. If in ancient times the idea was prevalent that to love a goddess made one immortal, it is no less certain that that love which inclines toward bestiality may bear as its fruit the progeny of Nebuchadnezzar. . . . Wisdom, dullness; hope, doubt; candor, perversity; the lights and shadows of judgment; intrepidity and meekness of soul: all good and all evil, every unworthiness and every excellence are possible in the soul whom love possesses, while he dreams and longs for the soul of his beloved, as much when she works

calculatingly and consciously, as when she rules with a fatal and as it were magnetic influence.

In all love there is the abnegation of mysticism, whether this mysticism is diabolical or divine; because when the lover rids himself of his will and his own being, he is transported to the object of his love, he is reborn in it and becomes part of it: "he lives in its body," to use the forceful phrase of Euripides. If the object is vile or employs the methods of villainess for her proposed end, it will make the lover vile. It will make him noble and great if by affinity he seeks the heights, or if he requires nobility and greatness as the protectors of the destiny toward which he is naturally gravitating. Let me look into the depths of the soul which is the star of your love, and I shall tell you, as if I could see it through a necromancer's glass, where you are headed for in this world, and what may be expected of you in thoughts and in accomplishments.

If this were absolutely true, a cold impassivity would be better than love which is fixed upon one who is unworthy of love: amorous passion contains in its very essence to prevent such a fatality a principle, so expedient and so forceful that it frequently triumphs over the inferiority of the object. Hence, even applied to a vile object, love very often persists as a dignifying and fecund potency; not because love then fails to fit the personality of the beloved to a model, nor because this model may be different from the adored image, but because it is a virtue of the enamored soul to be inclined to sublimate the idea of the object. What he subjugates and governs is, rather than the real object, the idea that he conceives of it and as a result of this idea base reality is purified and exalted—correspondingly he ennobles the power which in the hands of reality was a lascivious enslavement. There is, in fact, only one thing capable of overcoming the influence which the real being of the beloved exercises upon the lover: it is the

ideal state that the beloved object acquires in the fires of love's imagination with an omnipotent sway over the sensibility and the will that are conjoined with that imagination. This is the triumph which the servant of love often gains over his own master when love is disinterested and fine: he theoretically extricates the tyrant from his wickedness and, after the tyrant has been extricated, he extricates himself from what would probably be fatal in the imposition of tyranny, availing himself, to his advantage, of that sovereign strength which the tyrant intended to do him ill, like the conqueror who makes use of the arms of the conquered, as Judas Maccabeus fought with the sword of Apollonius. What is of importance is, not so much the quality of the object, as the quality of love; and rather than from a resemblance to the real being, from the object, the beauty of the image will be born from the virtue of a love sincere, generous and with a touch of ideality. A common feat of this kind of love is to change clay into gold, poison into balsam; to make fruitful what was vain, to purify the obscene; to place in the lover's heart the precious salt which guards him from corruption and on his lips the burning coal which cleansed the prophet's. If in the fury and vertigo of spurious love there is the beginning of moral decay, an *idea febrilis*, whose progress suggested to Alphonse Daudet the impious pages of his *Sappho*; lofty and noble love carries within itself a capacity for order and sublime discipline which corroborates and establishes upon a firmer base all the energies and powers of personality. Even in its violent, stormy and tragic manifestations, love retains its purifying virtue and the power to leave the will, which it found disgracefully lax, exalted and proud—as a bolt of lightning that strikes the feet of a paralytic, instead of harming him, often brings back to him, in a moment, the use of his limbs.

§ 113. *How an ideal power prevents the loss of an infinite number of intimate details of our internal activity*

Another beneficial influence of an idea or superior sentiment which rules within us is that it prevents the dispersion and the annihilation of an infinite number of minute details of our internal activity.

When your soul is not subject to such a power, every hour of your life a multitude of thoughts and images pass through it and are lost, one after another, not having anything to stop them and direct them to a useful end. But if an ideal force dominates your spirit actively and vigilantly, many of your vague thoughts, of your fleeting, light imaginings, are drawn into the circle of that dominating force; and if they carry with them any usefulness it is seized and joined to the rest which is ready to use the new supply—for it is characteristic of these great forces of the soul to hoard their income like a miser who would as well disdain a wretched maravedi as a gold-piece. It happens in more extensive spheres, just as when we are writing a book, that whatever we see, think, or read, becomes related with the idea that governs the work of our imagination; in one way or another enriches it and opens up new fields for it. But this idea that sovereignly governs our spirit does not only subject those new elements which it gathers to its rule; its power should be compared with the seed that it fertilizes rather than with the authority that it wields, because, when it halts and penetrates the essence of a thought which passes by its side, frequently it is moved to create a new group of ideas, perhaps superior to itself—just as a vigorous generation obtains from the love of their parents, a distinct, autonomic, and perhaps more noble child.

As in the times of candid and fervent piety, a radiance, a

murmur, any trivial thing, easily acquires a mystic significance and a profound transcendency for the over-exalted soul of the neophyte, by which are explained divine warnings and sublime illuminations—so for one who bears in his heart a great ideal love, a thousand trifles of the reality of each hour, a thousand light impressions upon his sensibility and his senses, which for most men pass without leaving a trace, gain the power to awaken new, fruitful associations—a suggestive virtue which opens unexpected vistas upon the useful and the beautiful.

What fecund thought, what happy invention, what new truth, or new beauty, or triumph for the good, or improvement in the condition of many people, has Humanity lost in this way: an idea passes through a mind, like a sudden flash of lightning; it is denied by the very mind which held it, the kindness of its attention; it is despised, judged a paradox born from the free play of fancy; and in the depths where the things which desert the memory fall, the idea is lost forever. Attended to, cared for, placed under the auspices of reflection, it might have been able to cross the gap from the seed to the fruit, from the chimera to glory!

In short: an ideal devotion which prevails for a while in your life, even when it suddenly fades and passes on, leaves you the benefit of the discipline to which it subjected you; of the temptations from which it removed you; of the employment it gave to wavering forces of your sensibility and your mind; of the enthusiasm with which it decked your soul; of the need for order and harmony which it established there forever by the authority of habit.

#### § 114. *Hylas*

Hylas, a youth of the heroic age, was accompanying Hercules on the expedition of the Argonauts. When the ships

arrived at the coast of Mysia, Hylas went ashore for some water. In the heart of a fresh glen he found a clear, placid spring. Bending over it, he had hardly made the attempt to dip his jar into the crystal waters, when several graceful nymphs rose out of the water and carried him off, a captive of love, to their enchanted dwelling. Hylas' companions came to seek him as soon as they noticed his delay. Up and down the coast they went calling him; but they wearied the echoes in vain. Hylas did not appear; the ships continued on their way to the land of the golden fleece. From then on, it became the custom among the inhabitants of the district where he had remained a captive to go through the woods and the meadows at the beginning of each spring and call him. When the first flowers bloomed and the breezes grew gentle and warm, sprightly young people, tremulous with emotions, dispersed over the environs of Prusium. "Hylas! Hylas!" they shouted. Nimble footsteps violated the mysteries of the woodland; noisy groups climbed over the gentle slopes; youths and maidens fringed the shores. "Hylas! Hylas!" repeated the echo everywhere, the fervent blood flushed their smiling cheeks and their breasts palpitated with joy and fatigue, and the circles of their joyous races braided the fields with garlands. At sunset the search ended fruitlessly. But the next spring once again summoned all to the search for the handsome Argonaut. Time weakened the voices which had sounded so vigorously and so harmoniously before; it rendered the bodies, previously nimble, unfit for running through the meadows and forests; new generations gave the legendary name to the spring breezes: "Hylas! Hylas!", a vain shout that never brought a reply. Hylas never appeared. But from generation to generation, young strength was still exerted in the beautiful rehearsal; the joy of the blossoming fields entered their souls, and each day of this ideal festival revived,



with the candor that still remained fresh, a sacred anxiety: the hope of a miraculous return.

As long as Greece existed, once a year the loud shout floated on the spring winds: "Hylas! Hylas!"

§ 115. *Conviction, faith. Tolerance and how it should be understood*

There is a lost Hylas within the field of every human soul; Hylas lives for each one of us. Suppose he may never appear: what does it matter, if only the eagerness of searching for him is a reason and a stimulus to make life still alluring?

A supreme objective for the movements of our will; an exclusive preference in the center of our hearts; a sovereign idea upon the summit of our thought . . . not like jealous and suspicious potentates, but like hospitable and benevolent lords, at whose side there is room for other manifestations of life than those which they have under their immediate jurisdiction; although indirectly and delicately, their influence penetrates them all and they use them for their own ends.

From the laggard Idomeneus, we have already seen how perseverance in a lofty ideal, how the fervor of a great purpose can be harmonized with a loving interest in all the rest of the beautiful and good things which the infinite extent of the world embraces. Let us look at another aspect of this same virtue of sympathy; let us pass over its relation to the different vocations and forms of activity, its relation to various doctrines and beliefs, and let us consider it for its influence on our conviction or our faith. In this sphere that virtue is fecund and generous tolerance.

Tolerance: the end and culmination of all profound thought; the peak where the meaning of life is clarified and enlarged. But let us understand tolerance completely; it is not

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that kind which is merely intellectual light and is at the disposition of the indifferent and the sceptical, but that which has also the warmth of feeling, the penetrating force of love. Tolerance which affirms, which believes, which succeeds in fusing, as if in immortal bronze, hearts of different casts. . . . It is not pallid eclecticism without claws, without balm. It is not the ineptitude of enthusiasm which has the beginning of easy submission in its own inferiority. Nor is it the trifling curiosity of the *dilettante*, which pursues ideas for the mere pleasure of conceiving them; nor the emotionless attention of the savant, who tarries over each idea for the intellectual ambition of knowing it. It is not, finally, the vain, turncoat enthusiasm of the unreflecting and the capricious. It is the loftiest expression of charitable love, transported to the realm of thought. It is the conveyance of one's personality (and this is not done without a pious preconception of benevolence and optimism) to the soul of all sincere doctrines. For these, only by being human creations, the work of men, wrought with the labors of their minds and mellowed with warmth of their hearts, and consecrated by the blood and tears of their martyrdom, deserve affection and interest. They have in themselves a certain virtue of fecund suggestion, because there is no sincere effort in the direction of truth which does not teach us something above it, nor any veneration for the infinite Mystery, which, well comprehended, does not yield the soul a delicious taste of love. . . .

§ 116. *Every faith or conviction must be modifiable and perfectible. Sincerity with itself*

Besides being tempered in the forges of this tolerance, our conviction or our faith must be *dynamic*; it must be modifiable and perfectible, capable of keeping pace with the pro-

gressive development of our personality; a condition, if we examine it closely, included in the other, because the idea which relates and communicates with those ideas that emerge from it is, through active tolerance, an idea which is ceaselessly being moulded in the hands of indefatigable sympathy.

Consequently, the sum of ideas which at a determined moment is collected and reconciled in our minds by the single idea that forms the basis of our conviction, must never be thought of as a definitive order, as the end and repose, but as a guidepost with whose help we can follow an ideal path, a course which we are taking: as the traveler who does not know his way, and inquires of those who live nearby, becomes orientated through successive directions and goes from the tree to the house, from the house to the mill, from the mill to the corn-field.

In order that our thought may obey this law of its vital development and not become eddied in routine dreaming, it needs, together with its aptitude for tolerant intercourse, the habit of *being sincere with itself*; a rare and precious kind of truth, much more arduous than that which concerns our relations with others; much more arduous than that which consists of the remembrance of what we falsify and what we say with the full knowledge of our conscience; a testimony that may be faithless, superficial, or unpurified. That profound inner sincerity compels us to trace the sources of this attestation; to know ourselves as clearly and as precisely as possible, guarding against the thousand causes of error which commonly deceive us about our own thoughts and acts, and training ourselves always to distinguish the real conviction of our minds from that which has ceased to be, which remains only because of inertia and habit, and from that which was never more than a servile echo or a vain impression upon it. Devoted to the practice of this reflective knowledge, and

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searching the very depths of itself, manly thought has no fears because, even though that constant effort to be sincere and truthful perpetuates in its breast the discomfort of agitation and struggle, it scorns the voluptuousness of quietude, casting aside everything spiritless and frail, and living only by what it gains each day through its own strength, just as a workingman does.

§ 117. *The most constant tranquil conviction is not always the deepest one*

Beyond doubts, beyond discouragements and reanimations, beyond the afflictions and importunities of the struggle which arises in the interior of the consciousness and the struggle which is sustained in the blazing sun of human contradiction, the idea which resists and triumphs over all opposition is strengthened, embellished and magnified.

But this is not the best and most accredited proof by which one can guarantee the sincerity of a faith which consists of affirming its unalterable equality, without hazards, without alternatives, without any increase or diminution of fervor and trust; unless it be in those souls who in their anticipation of heavenly bliss are excluded from the general rule, because of their candor of heart or their simplicity of mind. But in one who breathes the turbulent torrent of human nature, who fights in the combats of the world, a faith perennially the same, without temptations or raptures, a faith which never heard the steps of an inner enemy, generally prefers to blame its superficiality upon the fact that it has taken root in the soul where it is; and so it keeps itself pure and serene because neither the mind with eager attention nor the sensibility with jealous, loving desire pays any attention to it.

Do not judge the superiority of your faith, then, only by

the peace which reigns about it. A true faith is like a vital organ which shares your life's breath; and life does not allow uniformity, equality, eternal peace. Only a mask or a statue has an unchangeable expression; living physiognomy reflects the varied movements of a soul, which modify and renew the appearance of color and line a hundred times. It is not the freest love of the clouds which lasts longest and penetrates farthest. It is not the most firm and most energetic faith that lacks discordance, an anxiety, a discontent with itself, to stimulate it by the grief and restlessness which they cause it, like a goad thrust into the heart. Perhaps faith sleeps unalterably, perhaps it rests only in the passivity of habit and is comparable to a pond which, scorned by the fury of the wind, remains unruffled; but the faith composed of the same substance as ourselves, the faith of a living soul is a troubled sea, which passes from the calm of contemplation to the turbulence of sorrowful thought, and from the heights of mystic ecstasy to the depths of weakness and doubt.

§ 118. *Organic petrification. Petrified faith.* Those who think that they believe

With what an astonishing subtlety does the slow, arduous work of substitution, which produces organic petrifications, change vegetable waste into rock without changing its form and structure in the least!

This stone was once the buried fragment of a tree-trunk. When vegetable substance is decomposed, each molecule that was lost in its secret and slow dissolution was replaced immediately and in its own place by another of silica. When the last little organic particle had been thrown off, the whole of it was rock—but not a line, not a relief, not a hollow, nor any minute accident of the internal construction of the tree-

trunk failed to preserve its appearance. This is the surface of the trunk, with its fissures and wrinkles; these are the cortical fibres; these the ligneous layers; these the radii which run from the center to the bark; and this is the hidden, solid heart of the tree. Even if that trick of Nature could have taken place before a perennial spectator, he would not have noticed it; so slow, so perfect has been its work. All is the same in appearance; yet all has changed in substance. Where there had been the remains of a tree, there is now only a chunk of rock.

You can see in this the image of what goes on in a multitude of souls. Once they held a conviction which love exalted, an intense, personal faith, nourished by the sap of their hearts and their thoughts, capable of renewing and surpassing itself in capacity and in sympathy. Then they remove their attention from intimate intercourse with ideas, because the noise of the world attracts it to the outside; or else, jealous of the integrity of their belief, they guard it from anything that might mean a removal, an innovating impulse. And whether it be for either of these reasons, while they rest assured that their idea has eternal life, there comes a time when that which they carried within them becomes only a dry concretion, a deceiving image of the faith which they previously encouraged with all the discipline which it established, with all the habits which it determined, with all that which constituted its form—with all of the faith except its sap and spirit. The peace and constancy which the soul then regards as signs of the resistant immutability of its sentiment are nothing more than the immobility of dead things. The slow and delicate work of time, working without any perceptible manifestation, has been enough to replace the spirit which created the form, by the form devoid of spirit. Time has robbed the soul of the essence of its faith, and the soul does not feel it. It sleeps,

dreaming of the past; as incapable of abandoning the belief to which it once attached itself, as of deriving from it a new, original love, a new enthusiasm, a new tenderness, a new poetry, a new science. . . . So inflexible devotees; rigid, grave prelates; eloquent apologists, perhaps; theological sages; or even illustrious pontiffs keep the petrified corpse of a faith in their hearts. Can they be called convinced believers? Not really. Impostors? Nor that either. Their sincerity is generally as indubitable as their ignorance of what goes on in their souls. *They think that they believe* is the precise expression of Coleridge.

§ 119. *To begin by simulation and to end with sincerity*

Another form of deceit among those which usurp the authority of reason in governing our ideas, is that one which may be qualified, in a certain way, as opposite to the one we have just considered: the enthusiasm and fervor which are aroused unexpectedly and with an enslaving force, in the deceitful practice of a false faith.

The opinions of men often begin by simulation and end with sincerity. You take part; adopt an idea, without a real conviction, perhaps even for selfish motives, perhaps passively following the footsteps of others. Then, in the admission or in the practice of that idea, you labor under illusions until you believe yourself firmly and disinterestedly convinced; and thus, what was at first a mask of falsehood comes to be to a certain extent the truth, capable of inflaming you with passion, and even of moving you to noble sacrifice.

This does not imply that you may have been convinced: it only implies that the image with which you deceived others has ended by deceiving you, yourself. You think and feel as if inside of you there were an idea which governed you, by the

means that you might expect from a matured conviction or a profound faith, when there is nothing there but a traitorous shadow which you imprudently showed the way to your inner self, thinking you had authority over it, and which has robbed you of your liberty—working within you like an hypnotic command that one unconsciously obeys even after returning to wakefulness. How often does the liar come to believe in his inventions with all ingenuousness? How often does the deceitful arguier pass, without conscious transition, from the artificiality of his sophisms to the certitude of passionate conviction and to the illusion that he is breaking lances for the truth? How often does the false lover, pitying himself, lament as pains of love those which are born from the malevolence of his ambition or his pride? How often does the most despicable criminal find, within the scope of his interests, resources with which to appease his conscience and even with which to make it declare him innocent? How often does the divine poet come to feel the reality of what he imagines, even as far as to adopt the soul of his creatures, forgetting his true personality? . . .

Similar to these is the person who is disillusioned by his own simulations of enthusiasm and faith. Whoever has even slightly examined the secrets of human opinions will not fail to recognize some prototype of this lineage of convinced, believing persons; they began by a clever deception, or, at the best, by an attachment lacking both zeal and reflective maturity; after being thrown into the turmoil of action, they believe themselves sincere,—which is almost the same as if they really were—and so work in compliance with this sincerity, and perhaps declare themselves capable of the extremes of constancy, loyalty, and courage by which an heroic conviction manifests its character.

The first word which is spoken aloud, falsely affirming an



idea; the first act by which one makes a pretense to serve this idea before strange eyes: these are a step in the direction of forgetting what the intention had of falsehood. Afterwards, the loves and hates which are born from the action; the interest and the vanity united in behalf of perseverance; society's suggestion that it become a part; the subtle and powerful tactics of habit: all these conspire to perfect the work. In this way an imitation of conviction is created that deceives the very soul in which it is produced. For it is not a pure falsehood, a comic art, since it drags one's heart and one's belief along with it; as you fancy yourself to be, that is how you appear before the world, you being the first one deceived. But what is even more remote from complete and true conviction is that which rests upon reason and which does not come to you imprisoned by interest or habit, but which searches you out openly and triumphs over you, fencing, like a foil, with your own free thoughts.

§ 120. *The possibility of auto-suggestion in the apostle. An anecdote about Rousseau*

Even in the revealer, in the prophet, in the apostle, in the one who coins ideas with his own bust and his inscription (without condescending to include among this number the impostor who carries forward the gross simulation of a faith), even in these how often can the idea which is the basis of their originality, the talisman of their authority and glory, have for its beginning, not an inspired intuition, not a profound and laborious discourse, nor the second sight of the heart; not these paths of sincerity, but a calculation of gain, a volubility of mind, a sophistical game, harborers who have allowed the idea to pass into the soul? In time this idea ends by interesting and captivating the very soul that conceived it

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without believing in it, until one day it seems to him the absolute truth; it initiates him into a blind faith and, occupying the center of his soul, which it probably has not the strength to leave, it serves henceforth as a standard and as a motor for the activity of that great spirit for him to honor and foster. . . .

I will never forget the revelation in Marmontel's *Memoirs* about the origin of Rousseau's philosophy of nature: that hate for civilization and that faith in the kindness inherent in spontaneity and primitivism, which were the backbone of his works and which gave verve and character to his thought. Marmontel recounts some of Diderot's confidences that may not be far from the truth, even though his well-known hatred might have prompted them. The author of *La Religieuse* and the author of *Émile* were walking along together; Rousseau revealed his plan to take part in the literary controversy opened by the Academy of Dijon, on the influence of the arts and sciences on morals and customs. "Which side will you uphold?" asked the Encyclopedist. "The affirmative," replied Jean-Jacques. Then Diderot observed that the affirmative solution was self-evident while the audacity and strangeness of the negative would lend it interest and originality. "It is certain," said Rousseau, after thinking a moment, "then I shall support the negative." And his "mémoire" of the controversy, the germ which contains virtually all of his future work, was that famous invective against civilization which extirpates natural candor from human society.

From that puerile and that not at all serious movement of the soul was born a whole philosophy which, though it doubtless became sincere and passionate in the soul of the apostle, was to the spirit and the reality of the world the passion and fire of conflagration.

§ 121. *The suggestions of a fertile soliloquy. Avail yourself of solitude and silence! . . .*

How complicated is the problem of our relations with our own thoughts! Ah, these relations are subject to the same deceptions and tricks as are present in men's intercourse with each other! And what an able, energetic and pertinacious effort of sincerity is sometimes needed to distinguish within one's own consciousness the idea which really does *live* from that which, with the semblance of life, lies dead within us, which was never more than a vain echo, a soulless artifice!

How long is it since you have stopped to examine face to face that idea to which a past choice binds you, that dogma, that school, or that faction which gives your thinking a public name?

Avail yourself of solitude and silence! Allow an intimate impulse of the soul to carry you to its own high seas where only its own bare, impressive immensity can be seen; where the disturbing echoes of passion do not sound; where the glances which frighten or mock you do not reach; where there is no other master controlling your will but the reality of your being. And there, as if you were consulting the grandeur of the horizon across the limpid air, ask yourself without fear: "Is it true, actually true, that I believe in that which I profess to believe? This conviction I acquired one day and on which I have been leaning ever since, will it now stand analysis? This sentiment which I consider still alive, for it was so once, may I not find it dead if I attempt to arouse it? Is my faith sustained merely by the inertia of a past impulse? Have I stopped to discover whether my faith contains within it that which I have later learned through the work of time? When I affirm it, is this affirmation then only a habit of my

lips or is it each time, as it should be, another expression of my heart? If I were now to decide, for the first time, my way of thinking, if the attachments that I have formed, the words that I have said, my worldly ties and affiliations did not exist—would I choose the field in which I am now? . . . And what of that doubt which one day passed through my soul, a doubt which I cast from me through negligence or fear? If I had confronted it with a valorous sincerity, might it not have been the starting point for a revolution of my ideas? My constancy to a custom, my attachment to a philosophy, my fidelity to a doctrine—are they not hindrances in the development of myself? Am I telling myself the truth in all this? . . . Does not a mask veil the depths of my mind from my consciousness? . . .”

Make such a soliloquy. Make it beneath the majesty of the late night, or go with it to the pure open fields, free from human fictions, or by the sea, great confidant of meditators, when the wind becomes silent on the sleepy waves. Avail yourself of solitude and silence!

§ 122. A “Jubilee” that ought to take place

Oh, if we could make a habit of this purification of our spirit, this exercise in sincerity—what a great step would have been taken toward the perfection of our character and intellect! But the great multitude of men not only absolutely ignores such meditation, reserved for those who delve into serious speculation, but hastily frightens and drives away from their thought the slightest shadow which may have succeeded in penetrating its crevices to blur the serenity of the docile acquiescence upon which it rests. To face the importunate shadow which threatens our faith and to try to banish it so as to evince reason, courage and a well-gained vic-

tory, is an act of profound constancy which most people dare not attempt—some, due to the laziness of a mind which refuses to be disturbed from the sensuousness wherein it sleeps in a vague, nebulous faith; others, due to an over-zealous fanaticism, which leads them to suspect that in each new thought there is hidden a treacherous guest, and warns them against the suggestion of any new ideas, as scrupulously as the giant who, according to the ancients, unceasingly patrolled the shores of Crete to prevent any foreigner from leaving footprints on its sands.

Would it not be an important step in men's practice of truth and freedom for them to take an inventory as merchants do periodically, or, better still, like the "*Jubilee*" of old, during which a man would withdraw, for a certain number of years, to renew his life through the elimination of all his debts and the pardoning of his injuries? So in our own life we should set aside one week at the end of each year and retire, favored by solitude, to the interior of our consciousness. In pythagorean silence, we should summom for examination our opinions and doctrines, just as we profess them to the world, so that we may weigh anew their sincerity, the reality of their persistence and take another point of departure if we feel them outworn, or renew and stimulate them if we find them consistent and vital.

I am sure, if such an inventory were taken, that all our convictions which we considered of a profound and immutable nature would become questionable. And how many unexpected conversions would then take place! How many of those false convictions and faiths that walk proudly through the world believing themselves deep realities of the soul will be destroyed as soon as they are taken from the urn where prejudiced custom preserves them, like a corpse which, perhaps, has maintained the integrity of its form in the confines

of the tomb, yet no sooner does the fresh air touch it, than it disintegrates and is blown away like futile dust.

§ 123. *There is no conviction that you can cease to work upon*

There is no once-acquired conviction that you should cease to work upon. For, although its basis of truth may be very firm and secure for you, it is wholly worth while to stir up, air, and retemper your conviction and confront it with new aspects of reality and exhibit its strength in new conflicts and carry it with you to explore new lands of thought, new seas of incredulity and doubt, which it can subject to its sway, increasing its greatness. You should corroborate it from within itself by rendering the connection between its component parts stronger and more harmonious.

For if your conviction is a true one, is it not your duty to enter each time further into its truth and to adhere to it as far as possible with stronger assuredness and love? Work, then, upon the conviction thus acquired. Corollate it with new ideas, new experiences, new examples of contradiction, new spectacles from the theater of the world. If your conviction persists and prevails, how much more tried its energy will be! How many more elements will it have conquered, arranging about itself, by its own virtue and efficacy, everything you have brought it in contact with! The firmest conviction will be that which maintains the greatest number of ideas about it and succeeds in uniting them in the most cohesive and concordant relationship. All that lives and progresses moves at once toward greater complexity and greater order. If you are occupied only in perfecting the unity and the satisfactory arrangement of your conviction, without adding extraneous elements which may extend and revive it, you will fall into

the automatism of a well-disciplined but narrow faith. If, on the other hand, you concentrate only on increasing the supply of ideas in your mind and are not careful to distribute and arrange them, you will fall into the anarchy of contradictory and tumultuous thought. But if you succeed in placing each idea that you earn for your mind in adequate relation to the superior, central idea of your meditations, this will be one more step toward assuring the stability of the central thought, like a new root which issues from it and becomes buried in the bosom of things.

Even when you know that you will not have to abandon your present view of things, but that you will rest throughout life upon what you now consider the truth, you should not, because of that, throw away the instruments of investigation and labor, like the worker who thinks his task is finished; your task would be, from then on, to extend the relations of your truth, to adapt it to whatever new element it brings with it each hour, train it, like the hawking bird, to hunt for error and, finally, to see that your conviction incloses within its bounds a complete and well-founded conception of the world.

But no one can say: "This is my final and definitive faith"; and when we carry out this determination to air and exercise the conviction of our minds, and when an idea comes to us which not only refuses to be subordinated to that conviction in any way whatsoever, but which, once the conflict is established, resists this conviction and wounds it in its very core so that we can not guard it from danger—then what is there for us to do but to declare the old power conquered and to transfer to this new idea the sceptre of our thought, if we are to proceed in these conflicts according to the manly and chivalrous dictates of reason? . . .

§ 124. *A well-acquired conviction is the result of accumulated work*

A conviction which we acquire with all the eagerness and vigilance of our minds is like a fortune amassed by the sweat of our brow: accumulated through strenuous work. But, just as he who enjoys a well-earned fortune should not, for that reason, if he has youth and strength, choose to squander it in idleness, removing from the active current of the world the portion of life which Nature has infused into his being and entrusted to his will (for this portion is like the credit which one has in business or the arms with which one is provided for battle)—so he who morally lives from the profits of a faith which he has acquired but does not modify or reconquer this faith by the daily work of his mind, if there is in him the ability to think, is he not a vain and idle person? . . . And even more so is he who enjoys the benefits, not of a conviction which he has formed for himself at some previous time, but of a creed which, without any effort of his own, he has received from tradition or which has been transmitted to him by authority—an inherited fortune, which he does not improve or glorify. He is like a spoiled child who passes through life without distinction, while round about him the fecund work of others resounds on the anvils, vibrates in words and darkens the air with its breath.

§ 125. *Voices that hinder the emancipation of a conscience.*  
*First voice: that of pride*

Each time that there arises in your soul an ardent desire for liberty, an impulse toward sincerity which urges you to break



the rusty chain with which a past opinion still binds you and and to exhibit your thoughts in their statuary nakedness, different voices join in persuading you to crush your virile resolution in the bud and to imprison you in the lazy sophistry of: "I want to believe and I must not stop to analyze why I believe."

Those voices which frighten you emanate sometimes from the mouths of others, now from within you, yourself.

First voice: a voice born within you, the voice of pride. This one is directed from the weakest spot in your heart to the point wherein the punctiliousness of vain appearance and human approbation dwell, and from this weakness it derives the strength with which to resist truth, which seeks you like a loyal and candid lover.

What is the most foolish form of pride? The pride of immobility.

Do you perhaps refrain, through pride, from correcting your error, from abandoning your parapet of sophistry? Have you perhaps become vain of your unalterable permanency, there where your first vision of things placed you, or where perchance worldly suggestions confined you, without the mediation of your judgment—suggestions which you blindly took as the foundations of conviction and faith? . . . And should that be a basis for pride? And should that be a hindrance to restoring your soul to the current of life? . . .

Pride founded on immobility! Your soul will never be as still as a rock, to which you concede, without knowing it, the supreme place in creation. Can you conceive that bondage should engender pride? If bondage is an intoxication of personality, a loss of self-control, what is your condition as long as you persist in not touching with your active mind the yoke imposed on you by inexperience, if not bondage voluntarily accepted? And this is how ignominy is born for the slave.

You are a voluntary slave; the slave of vanity, the slave of a fiction, the slave of a shadow, the slave of your own past which is dead within you; the slave of Death.

§ 126. *Second voice: "Apostate, traitor!"*

Another voice comes either from the grandstand of the circus of the world or anticipates the one which will be raised in your conscience if your will finally frees you. "Apostate, traitor!" shouts the recriminating and reproachful voice. And the dogmas or the opinion whence it derives its authority know its accent well, for this voice sounded the same way to the ears of him who first confessed them: "Apostate, traitor!" This is the wet-nurse's song for the soul which is born to a life of personal thought after having unconsciously vegetated in the uterus of a tradition or a school. There is no human belief which has not had some inconsequence, some infidelity at its beginning. The dogma which has now become sacred tradition was at its birth a daring heresy. In abandoning this dogma to support your own *truth*, you simply follow the example of the teacher who, in founding it, trespassed the authority of the idea which, likewise, was dogma in his times. And if perhaps he did not need to forsake this faith, because he was not educated in its doctrine but came from the outside to disrupt it, at least he established a following of those whom he induced to forsake it. Just as by going back to the origin of the highest lineage of nobility one will always find a glorious stranger, a heroic adventurer, a barbarous soldier or a rough laborer, so, exploring the source of the most venerable faith, the idea most in harmony with the majesty and pomp of the centuries, one will always find an apostate, a heretic, a rebel. And just as all the honor of that aristocracy emanates from the personal impetus of an

obscure man who, having risen from the dust, raised his posterity with him, in the same way, the magnetism, and the internal strength of this faith, are like the *undulations* of that personal impetus of rebellion, disobedience, and audacity of the heretic who forsook the old faith so as to have faith of his own.

§ 127. *Gorgias' Farewell*

Those seated at a table, laden with flowers and amphoræ of wine, over which presides an old man, beautiful and serene as a god; those who drink but show no sign of mirth; those who frequently rise to consult the height of the sun and at times let fall a tear—they are the disciples of Gorgias. Gorgias has taught a new philosophy in the city that cradled him. Its implications have stirred up suspicion and have alarmed the authorities. Gorgias is going to die. He has been allowed to choose a way of death and he has chosen that of Socrates. At sunset he is to drink the hemlock; he still has two hours to live and he passes them in sublime serenity as host at a melancholy feast where flowers caress the eyes of the guests. Their thought kindles the banquet with an intimate light and a mild wine gives inspiration for the last toast. Georgias says to his disciples: "My life is a garland to which we are going to fasten the last rose."

This time the pleasure of gracefully philosophizing, which belongs to exquisite souls, is enhanced by an unusual unction. "Master," says one, "we shall never be able to forget either you or your doctrine." Another puts in, "We would rather die than deny a single word which has come from your lips." And enlarging upon this sentiment, a third adds: "Let us pledge fidelity to every word he has uttered, to whatever is virtually contained in each of his words,

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faithful before men and in the depths of our conscience, always and invariably faithful." Gorgias asks the one who has spoken in this way, "Do you know, Lucius, what it is to swear falsely?" "I know," replies the youth, "but I firmly feel the profundity of our convictions and I believe that we ought to console you in your last hour with that promise which is sweetest to your soul."

Then Gorgias begins to speak in this manner: "Lucius, listen to an incident of my childhood. When I was a little boy, my mother took so much delight in my goodness, in my beauty and, above all, in the love which I bore her, that it pained her deeply to think that my childhood and all that happiness would have to pass. Thousands upon thousands of times I heard her repeat: 'How much would I give that you might never cease to be a child! . . .' Weeping, she anticipated the loss of my youthful happiness, of my candor, of that beauty which was like that of a flower or a bird, of that unique love, thanks to which only she existed on this earth for me. She was not resigned to the idea of the inevitable work of Time, that barbarous deity who would place his hand on such a fragile and divine good, who would destroy the delicate and graceful form and who would embitter the taste of life, bringing guilt where there was once unblemished innocence. She was even less reconciled to the image of a future but certain woman who perhaps would bring grief to my soul in payment for love. And she insisted on her pertinacious desire: 'How much would I give that you might never, never cease to be a child.' On a certain occasion, a woman from Thessaly, who pretended to be familiar with charms and enchantments, heard her and showed her a means of attaining that vehement desire, so unrealizable within the common bounds of Nature. Repeating certain magic incantations she was to place over my heart

every day the warm and still-bleeding heart of a dove; this would serve as a sponge with which to eradicate each trace of time; and to rub my forehead with a wild iris, massaging it until the flower lost all its moisture, thus keeping my thoughts clean and pure. Possessing this precious secret, my mother returned with the determination to carry out the instructions immediately. That night she had a dream. She dreamed that she had proceeded as she had been directed, that many years had passed but that I kept my childhood intact and that she, herself, favored with the gift of attaining an extreme old-age, was in a constant ecstasy at the contemplation of my unaltered good-fortune: my untouched beauty, my unpolluted purity. . . . Then, in her dream, there came a day when she could find neither the iris flower nor the dove's heart. And on awaking and running to me the following morning, she saw instead of me an old man austere and dejected; everything about him indicated an endless anxiety; there was nothing noble or grand in his appearance and in his glance shone flashes of desperation and hatred. 'Evil woman!' she heard him cry, turning to her with an angry frown, 'you have robbed me of life because of a ferocious egoism, giving me a shameful happiness in exchange, which is the mask under which you hide from your own eyes your frightful crime. . . . You have converted my soul into a vile toy. You have sacrificed me to a foolish whim. You have deprived me of the action that ennobles, of the thought that illumines, of the love that creates. . . . Return to me what you have taken! But this is not the hour to return it to me because this very day is the one which Nature has set for the end of my life, which you have squandered in a miserable fiction, and now I am going to die with only enough time to curse and despise you. . . .' My mother's dream ended there. From then on she stopped deploring the

brevity of my childhood. If I were to accept the vow you propose, O Lucius, I would be forgetting the moral of my parable which is directed against the absolutism of a dogma made at one time for always; against the faith that does not permit a flight further than the horizon it revealed to us at first. My philosophy is not a religion that takes a man at the dawn of childhood and with the faith that it infuses in him, aims to take possession of his life, making his infancy eternal just as my mother wished to do before she was undeceived by her dream. I was to you a teacher of love. I have tried to give you a love for the truth and not the truth, for that is infinite. Continue to seek and renew it like a fisherman who casts his net every day without expecting to exhaust the treasure of the sea. My philosophy has been a mother to your conscience, a mother to your reason. It does not close the circle of your thought. The truth that I have given you with it has cost you no effort, comparison, choice, verification or responsibility. A price you will have to pay as soon as you begin to really live and to seek your truth independently. Thus, we do not gain a mother's love by our own merits: it is a present Nature gives us. But then another love takes its place, according to the natural order of life, the love of a sweetheart, and this time we must indeed gain it. Seek a new love, a new truth. Do not be concerned if this new truth leads you to be unfaithful to something you may have heard from my lips. Remain faithful to me, love my memory as far as it may be an evocation of myself, alive and real, an emanation of my person, a perfume of my soul in the affection that I have for you; but do not cherish my doctrine unless there is no brighter lantern for the search of truth. Ideas may become as much of a prison as the letter of the law. Ideas fly rapidly over laws and formulæ; but there is something that goes even faster than they—it is

the life-spirit that blows in the direction of Truth." . . .

Then, after a brief pause, he adds, "You, Leuccippus, who are most saturated with the spirit of my teaching, what do you think of all this? And now that my hour is near, now that the light fades and the noise of the world grows still—for whom shall we pour our last libation? For whom this sparkling amber that remains in the bottom of the cups?" . . .

"Let it be," says Leuccippus, "for the one who after the first sun that you do not see will show us the truth, the light, the way; for the one who will remove the doubts that you leave in the shadow; for the one who will go beyond your last footprint, whose mind will dwell in a clearer and wider realm than yours. Let it be for all your disciples, if we have the right to that title, or for one of us, or for some foreign mentor who may captivate us with a book, a lecture or an example. If he shows us the error that you have mixed with the truth, if he makes one word of yours appear false, if he sees where you did not see, by these evidences we must understand that you are surpassed: Master, let us drink to him who will take your place in us, with honor!"

"To him," says Gorgias; and holding aloft his cup, hearing the executioner already approaching, while an august clarity dawns in his face, he repeats, "For the one who will take my place in you, with honor!"

§ 128. *"Although I have still other things to teach you, yet you would not be able to grasp them"*

Unfortunate is the leader who finds it repugnant to announce, as did the Baptist, the one who will succeed him; who does not say: "*He ought to become greater; I, to become less.*" He who comes to place the yoke and the brand estab-

lishes immutable dogmas, and once they are stamped, the natural appearance is changed forever; he who is sent to bring life, light and a new soul does not establish dogmas.

The words of Christ, besides announcing the preëminence of the spirit over the law, left also the acknowledgment of His own relativity, of His own limitations. His sublime grandeur is no less certain because of this limitation than is the grandeur of the sea and the mountains. He left also the acknowledgment of the distance of truth from his declared and concrete doctrine although he did not leave it entirely outside of his potential or virtual reach, of the possibilities of his development, of his capacity for adaptation and suggestion.

This is the imperishable significance of those profound words of the Scripture that Montano used as the motto of his heresy: "Although I have still other things to teach you, yet you would not be able to grasp them." Rather let us say: "This that I tell you now is not the whole truth but only so much of the truth as you can bear."

Thus, against the sterile quietude of dogma, against the pride of wisdom, shrouded in an eternal formula, the words of Christ protected for future generations the interests of unhampered thought; he exchanged the inviolability of mystery for the open discussion of all contradictions and doubts, without which the activity of thought, salt of human life, would be—to use again the words of the Gospel—"as the salt that becomes tasteless."

"Although I have still other things to teach you, yet you would not now be able to grasp them." Such a phrase applies just as well to the individual's conscience as it does to the conscience of humanity. There is no final termination to the discovery of truth. There is no one, definite and absolute revelation but a chain of revelations, a revelation from the



mouth of Time, a constant and progressive expansion of the soul according to its merits and its force in the bosom of infinite truth.

§ 129. *An idea that becomes a school or a party unfortunately looses an indispensable part of its essence. Names which engender hatred*

From the moment an idea is incorporated into a school, into a party, into a sect, into an established order, with the object of changing it and making it prevail as a norm of reality, there is lost an indispensable part of its essence and its aroma, of the free breath of life that circulated in the consciousness of the one who conceived or reflected on it before the words of a creed and the discipline of external regulations reduced it to an inviolable unity. And as the knot of this unity becomes tighter and its propaganda and forces, affirming themselves, need a more measured and narrower movement, its spirit weakens and whatever the idea gains in extension, by augmenting the numbers of its followers, it loses in its hold on the individual conscience.

It is not in the lists of formulæ, nor in the ceremonies of ritual, nor in the statements of a program, nor in the material of the banner, nor in the stones of the temple, nor in the lectures of the class-room, that the idea lives and bears its flower and fruit. The idea lives, blooms and bears fruit, realizes the strength and virtue which it has in itself, carries out its law, arrives at its end, transforms itself and gives out new ideas, as long as it is nourished in the depths of the individual conscience; exposed, as a ship to the beating of the waves, to the inner vicissitudes of each individual; freely

submitted to the operations of his understanding, to the boiling agitations of his heart, to the sharp blades of his experience, as it is intertwined and identified with the living warp of his soul.

Not only the immutability of the dogma in which an idea crystallizes nor the tyranny of the reality to which it is adapted in becoming action: the mere lightness of the word by which we name and classify it is an obstacle that often suffices to prevent and waste in the interior of consciences the fruitful liberty of its flight.

The need for classifying and naming our ways of thinking is not satisfied without the sacrifice of some of the most essential and delicate parts of our thought. From this need originate errors and limitations that not only adulterate the intimate reality of our thought in the opinion of others, but also, by the marvelous power of suggestion which is chained to words, react on the natural development of the idea that has made its abode in our soul and place the idea under a yoke, or better, compress it into a mould. "What philosophy, what religion do you profess; what is, in so many words, the doctrine to which you adhere?" And you have to answer with a name: to dress one might say in a uniform. . . . How little can be learned about the ideas of one who deeply thinks on important matters by cataloguing his thought under the names which usage puts at our disposal! No name of any system or school is capable of indicating, except superficially, the complexity of a *living* thought. And how necessary it is to remember this truth every instant! A faith or conviction in which you sincerely participate is, in the depths of its nature, an originality that belongs to you alone. For if the ideas that take root in you with the force of passion impregnate your soul with their juice, you,

in turn, impregnate them with the juice of your soul. And besides, an idea that *lives* in one's consciousness is an idea in constant development, in indefinite formation; each day that passes is in some way a new thing; each day that passes is vaster or more limited and circumscribed, or more complex, or purer; each day that passes needs, in fact, a new definition, a new creed to make it explicit, while any generic term which you may give it is always equal to itself. . . . When I give the name of a school, a cold division of Logic, to my living thought, I speak only about the intellectual crust of that which is leaven in me, the essence of my entire personality. I speak only of the impersonal residue from which the originality and nerve of my thought is absent and those of other people's thought which, by abstraction, I identify in that word with mine. The classification of ideas gives us, in a name, an apparent tie of sympathy and communion with multitudes whose ideas may in reality be quite contrary to ours. Alas, how often do those who are truly spiritual brothers have to remain forever separated by that dark and cold wall of a name; for the intimate truth of their soul, which creates this tie of brotherhood, does not find a name among the usual classifications provided for the opinions of men!

The *names* of ideas rather than their essential reality and, of course, rather than what is even deeper than ideas: the spirit, the intention, the faith—have not only copiously disseminated in the breasts of men ignorance and coldness but also hatred and death, infinite pain! If those who profess these calamitous *names* could see into the depths of their souls through an intuitive flash, the bandage that impaired their vision would be torn; and there on the very blood-stained field of battle they would unite in an overwhelming embrace of love.

§ 130. *Apparent inconsistency and essential perseverance*

An apparent inconsistency, a change that the populace takes as a sign of instability, may be, much to the contrary, an act of exemplary consequence, an act of perseverance in a more profound idea, in a purpose more fundamental than that which is evident in the change,—an idea and purpose to whose natural development we owe the elimination of outworn forms and the adoption of new ones; not different from the consecutive stages of development from the seed to the plant, from the plant to the flower, from the flower to the fruit,—successive forms whose impulse does not stop as long as the vital principle, that is present in all of them and binds them all together, prevails.

A tree's inconsistency would be to leave its life immobile in the flower, preventing the transition that produces the fruit: an inconsistency with the law of its nature. Perhaps if there were anyone ignorant of this law, on seeing the flower intact and permanent, while that of the other trees had changed into fruit, he would say: "O consistent tree, that does not forsake the light petals and uses its sap to keep the flower alive!" but we should see the inconsistency of the tree where he sees its fidelity and constancy.

So the life of a man may be governed from the depths of the soul by a great idea or an inviolable passion, and this dominant principle may be the one which, showing its constancy and force, imposes on the soul the modification of sentiments and ideas less essential than itself, although perhaps more apparent and less united with that part of us that the world sees. Consequently, the world perceives the inconstancy that there is on the surface and not the fidelity of the love that exists within.

When you hear malevolent voices that speak of apostasy in thought, of infidelity in conduct, always remember, before passing judgment, that it is generally because of the stability and permanence of the firmest spot of the soul that a man changes some aspects of his affections and ideas; because of the tenacity of a superior love or conviction whose adequate road follows its course in the direction of ideas and sentiments divergent from those with which it has until now coincided, thus there is a most tenacious will which, when seen from afar, appears erratic and wandering, and thus there are characters very contradictory externally who at bottom are really one.

Everything depends on knowing a person's central and dominant spring, his passion or cardinal idea, that "prime motor" of the soul not always manifest in the actions of men, which when unveiled we often see resolve disagreements into unity and supreme order, just as a person confused and disconcerted among sublime waves of music suddenly finds the leading thread that changes a great noise into stupendous harmony.

### § 131. *Apostasy disguised as constancy*

The public usually treats severely the infidelity of those who change their doctrine because they are inconstant or venal, and rarely punishes, even when it is just to do so, that other falsehood manifested by the fictitious permanence of an idea that has no longer living roots within the heart. Less apparent and so less of a cause for scandal, this kind of falsehood is much more frequent and no less pernicious than that which the public condemns. If he who obeys a stimulus that is not that of a sincere conviction and abandons the idea under whose banner he served deserves the name of

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apostate, then the person who perseveres in the superficialities of a belief when he feels that the substance and strength of it is exhausted—is he not also an apostate of that new truth which is announced by this ending of the faith he had? Of course he is. And one might say that as many times as he awakes from his sleep and regains the activity of thought without testing the truth upon which he bases his action, so many times more is he an apostate. The apostasy of many and of very lofty souls; the invisible and silent apostasy that renews itself day by day beneath proud brows and that the public flatters. And later the marbles of their magnificent tombs will perhaps be decorated with symbols of fidelity and firmness. . . .

### § 132. *Pyrrho's friends*

If this false perseverance, and, in general, if the sacrifice of the vigilant liberty of reason on altars of an unchangeable idea, does not create, in the reality of men's lives, all the deviations of thought and conduct that would seem the inevitable result, it is due to the fact that (against the will of the obsessed and the fanatic, and perhaps even without his noticing it) the instinctive impulse of his spirit, or the suggestion of the environment in which he lives, distorts the logic of that servile permanency for many of his acts and judgments.

The story is told of Pyrrho, the father of the sceptics, that, insistent on denying the possibility of any certainty and in order to show the distrust with which the data of the senses should be regarded, he never changed his course no matter what obstacle presented itself before him, whether it was a wall, a well, or a bonfire. It might be asked how it was that Pyrrho was not stopped by the wall, or burned

by the fire, or why he did not fall into the well. But Diogenes Laertius, who tells the story, takes care to add that the wandering sceptic was always surrounded by a circle of officious friends who compelled him by force to change his course when it was necessary. Thus, without discord between the will and the philosophy of Pyrrho, his philosophy lost its former risks for outdoor practice, and Pyrrho could be at once a philosopher and a walker. The dogmatic and the *obsessed* superior souls, as inflexible as the profession of their doctrine demands, usually save themselves, thanks to the fortunate inconsistencies of real life, from the fatal logic of their intolerance, because, like Pyrrho, they have solicitous friends who follow them closely: so closely that they are enclosed in their very souls. These friends of Pyrrho are: loyalty of judgment, moral sensibility, good taste, spontaneous and often unconscious forces of the soul, which, when the moment arrives, hasten to avoid the danger on the road by turning away from the fatal obstacle.

§ 133. *Third voice: tenderness and gratitude. How a first love may live throughout the loves that follow it*

Let us listen to the voices that arise from your soul when, pursuing the truth, you try to break the bond that ties you to the past in the history of your spirit. This voice which sounds now is sad and gentle; and, because of its gentleness and sadness, powerful. There is mingled in it something of the melancholy of memories and the tenderness of gratitude.

Is it perhaps a sentiment of fidelity that restrains your impulse to be free? Does it pain you to be unfaithful to the ideas that have been the lap on which your soul has fallen asleep, the maternal bosom which nourished it, the loving

voice that your thought heard on awakening? . . . Remember, in the first place, that separation does not compel hate, or even indifference and forgetfulness. The authority of reason may demand from you a love for the truth it teaches you and the abandonment of the error that it has dissipated; but let there remain in your heart piety and gratitude for the dreams in which error rocked you—is there any harm in this? If the pious sentiment persists after your disillusion and your liberation and if it is not an obstacle that hinders your progress—why does your austere reason deny it life? How many are there who, emancipated forever, know the moral voluptuousness of preserving, in a corner of their souls, the image and the aroma of their lost faith? . . .

Thus, a first love that death or any other type of fatality may have brought to an untimely end may remain in our memory much more vividly than a cold representation of the past; it lasts longest in that part of the memory that borders on the frontiers of the heart and that tenderly imprints on it the figures that it evokes. Even when life brings new loves, that first love is like a sandalwood box into which every new love enters and fits, and that first love continues living through all the others, noting with delight relationships, likenesses, looks and smiles that reappear in other eyes and on other lips, uniting in a bond of immortal sympathy two passions, free from conflict, purified from the jealousy and the egoisms of love, through the distance that separates life from death.

In order that a love which has been wrecked in reality may persist in you ideally, in a delicate and profound way, it is not necessary that you burn the remainder of your life in sacrifice to it, nor that you stop the fountains of your heart, sealing them like the opening of a tomb. If you suc-



ceed, by good fortune, in finding another object of love to fascinate you, your fidelity to the first love may still manifest itself through the echoes that this new melody, which strengthens your soul, awakens in your memory; or through the hazy distance with which remembrance completes and poetizes the landscape of the new love. And in the same manner, when reason forces you to abandon a faith that has filled your soul with love, it is not necessary that you should abhor that faith, nor should you even cease to love it. You can still be faithful and grateful to it; fidelity and gratitude are befitting the devotion of the remembrance which guards its reliques with pious solicitude and evokes the image of lost candor with a melancholy affection. As in the case of the two loves to which I was referring, where the one revives memories of the other, in sublime brotherhood, so the new faith is pleased perhaps to note coincidences, affinities, sympathies, between the moral sentiments by which the old faith modeled you and the doctrines into which severe reason now initiates you.

§ 134. *The immortal vestige left by all sincere faith*

A faith that has truly become rooted in the depths of your conscience, taking from there the elements for its sap which is later distributed and filtered throughout the entire soul; a faith that conforms with your life usually leaves after it has withered and died some immortal vestige, some memory of itself which never disappears and which, in the midst of the new faith or of the new conviction that replaces it, or of the doubt in which you may remain forever, keeps alive a spark of your soul's previous love.

An immortal vestige: not a transitory trace, like that which in the early moments of conversion makes evident,

through some gust of variability or through some regressive impulse of sentiment or of the will, the effort with which the faith you have abandoned tries to regain the heart that was formerly its own, and the effort that the new faith still needs to conquer certain corners of the heart.

This other more intimate vestige, about which I wish to speak to you, is like a diffuse wave which persists throughout your being, which does not manifest itself irregularly and discordantly, but like the background of a landscape or a picture. It is like a vague harmony, the *sonorous shadow* of a music which, deadened by distance, comes from the innermost depths of yourself in a perennial echo.

This vestige is left, above all, by the faith and the passionate conviction that possessed you in the first sweet age of thought, when your acquired beliefs arrange their threads on spindles that weave the finest and most resistant fabric of your personality; when the idea establishes with the affective faculties associations that do not dissolve without penetrating the very center of the soul. Faith, enthusiasm, the once "beloved truth"—even after they have been replaced by others and seem to have vanished from memory—usually shine through those that have taken their place and somehow influence their nature: as when a nation conquered in war succeeds, by its superiority in the peaceful arts, in gently and silently dominating the conqueror.

The perfume of the first contents of a glass lingers in it; so that any new liquor which you pour into it is impregnated with this perfume, and, as many times as you change the liquor, just so many times will the flavor of the one first served mix with the aroma characteristic of the new.

Thus it is that Christian austerity places its stamp upon the paganism of Julian the Apostate. Thus Renan (and

this is a very outstanding example) attains the strange harmony of his spirit: his sacerdotal education and the faith of his religious adolescence go along with him, in the intimacy of his soul, when he passes the meridian of reason; they perfume and color his life forever, and give him a sacerdotal attitude and unction even when he preaches doubt and analysis; although his faith has faded, it still remains indelible in him, as a poetical virtue, as an inner fragrance, as a *timbre* of sentiment, as a fairy hidden in the mystery of the soul, as an ideal force, the maintainer of a thousand deep associations and customs.

The doubt of Renan is saturated to the marrow with religiousness. The church of Treguier casts its friendly shadow throughout Renan's life. Is it not pertinent to ask if something similar, if not so intense, does not occur in everyone who has had a faith, a passionate conviction really *his very own*? The intensity of the perfume that these leave in their wake is lessened, is rarefied, even becomes subordinated to others—but never does it disappear. Nothing remains absolutely, but neither does anything, that has once efficaciously taken root in our moral life, die entirely.

§ 135. *Fourth voice: Fear solitude and loneliness. The three ravens in the discovery of Iceland*

. . . And another of the dissuasive voices says: "Fear solitude, fear loneliness. When you abandon the sweet protection of a faith, you cut the cable which holds your ship fastened to the safety of the coast, and you venture into the uncertain and limitless sea. Three ravens go with you. . . ."

The chronicles of the discovery of Iceland relate how some navigators on leaving Norway to explore the sea that

stretches northward toward the lands of eternal ice carried with them three of those fatidical birds. At that time the compass had not yet been invented. Sailing into the high seas, the navigators set the three ravens free, as a means of determining their course. The first turned back toward home, the second remained on the ship, and the third flew onward in a mysterious path. The ship followed the last; and once it had pierced through the secrecy of the boreal mists, the new land soon appeared upon the hazy horizon.

"With you also go three ravens"—the voice continues saying—"when, without a compass, you are lost in a deep sea, in a place from the solitude of which one can not discern the firm land of faith. Perhaps you are following the adventurous raven, and you anchor at last on a new coast. Perhaps you fear the strangeness of this course and you abandon it to follow the cautious raven which brings you back, in repentance, to the same port from which you departed. But alas! perhaps also, without making up your mind to take either of the two courses, you stay in the anguish of uncertainty, beside the raven which has remained with you in sorrowful and sarcastic fidelity. Will you sacrifice your faith to an aleatory hope? The sea whereon doubters sail is full of immovable or wandering ships, upon whose top-mast, like a black pennant, is perched a sad raven in desolate quietude."

§136. *In the strong, doubt is not confusion or idleness. Laborious doubt is, like faith, the beginning of discipline*

The force of this admonition is powerful when dealing with the weak in spirit, who are not born to feel the weight of any other authority but the one imposed from without

and are contained in the formula raised above the timid flight of their reason. They fear infinite solitude, they avoid the light, like a child who hides his eyes in his mother's lap, and they search for safety. But the person capable of liberty, the person for whom liberty means struggle and work, needs not fear that the renouncement of the protection of an outworn faith may be, definitively, a disorientation and an anxiety; that it may contribute to the disappearance of that directing principle, which is as a magnetic pole of the soul and which we have considered necessary to maintain the order of life and to season it with ideality. Because in the strong, doubt is neither epicurean idleness nor affliction and discouragement, but an antecedent of reintegration, a preparation for a reconquest that has as its goal the attainment, by means of the indomitable force of the emancipated conscience, of a new *truth*, a new center of spiritual love, new foundations for duty, action and hope. And this purpose is never vain if it is carried on loyally and perseveringly. In the creation of convictions and beliefs, the will helps immensely; for, like the kingdom of heaven, truth *withstands strength*. Nor can it even be said that, when such a purpose has no immediate reward, when it is prolonged greatly in the uncertainty of search, the soul will remain, until one reaches a goal, without a power to protect and direct it. The power of moral discipline will be, in the meantime, assigned to the persistent desire for future conviction. This tenacious eagerness which both concentrates and distributes the energies of the mind so that it may confront doubtful premises, includes a power no less effectively authoritative than the one which is united with the faith on which it was formerly founded. Like this faith, it opposes the discordance of the soul and the coldness that freezes it; like it, it prevents the emptiness of days without an ideal object. And

how will it be suited for that function of discipline, if the past faith was not a *personal* and profound one, beloved and well thought out, but a vegetative and languid one, without warmth and substance, nourished at the breasts of custom and superstition? . . .

§ 137. *An idea, to be efficacious, must be accompanied by sentiment. The pebble and the tree*

It is most important to maintain the vital renovation, the progressive movement of our ideas, about which I have been telling you; but do not ever forget that, in order that such a renovation may become a positive force in the government of one's own personality, and may not be reduced to a pure mechanism, enclosed, as if in a watch case, in theoretical knowledge, it is necessary that its impulse be extended to feelings and acts, and that it thus collaborate in the organic evolution of our moral life.

The idea that occupies our mind and dominates it, and completes its dialectical development there without influencing our work and feelings, is a thing which belongs to the history of our intellect and to the history of our knowledge but not to the history of our personality.

Pick up that pebble from the ground; bore a hole about its size in the bark of that tree, then put the pebble into the bark. Can it be said that you have linked that lifeless body to the life of the tree?

Cut more deeply into the trunk; open it to the very center where its texture is thickest and hardest, and place the pebble there. Will you say even now that that piece of stone forms part of the life of the tree?

You acquire from your teacher, or through your own initiative, an idea, a conviction; you fix it in your mind,

you deposit it in your memory, you corroborate and strengthen it by reasoning—do you think that this is enough for the idea to renew you, to modify your manner of being, becoming a new life incorporated in your life, a force added to that which moves the palpitations of your heart and adjusts the rhythm of your breathing?

The idea within you is like the pebble in the tree as long as the sensibility does not carry it off in its ardent current: for sensibility is the only force capable of changing the tone of life.

If your adhesion to a truth does not go beyond the realm of knowledge, no matter how firm and luminous you may see it, no matter how well you may know how to uphold it with the clearest and most subtle dialectic, and even when it implicitly brings about the need for conduct or for an active mode of existence different from those which until then you had led—do you think, perhaps, that you will respect that necessity, do you think that you will stop being the same?

Neither the truth nor the error that conquers you reforms your soul; what really reforms your soul is the truth or the error that impassions you.

It will be futile to change your doctrine, your cult or your teacher, even when you do it sincerely, if together with your new conviction there is not born in you the powerful feeling that takes the new idea and submerges it in the innermost recesses of your self, that mixes and dissolves it there in the substance of your soul, in such a way that there is nothing in you that is not colored with the hue of the idea and does not become saturated with its flavor and inflated with its ferment.

There is a long way from conviction to conversion. Con-

version is like a profound movement that upsets the order of the soul; like an executive idea that, working on the will by means of sentiment which is its certain spring, remakes or modifies personality. Conviction is a dictate that may remain isolated and inactive in the mind.

Let us not speak about those who, without true conviction, automatically or by deceiving themselves, profess an idea, a doctrine, whose firm and essential depth they have never touched. But even those really convinced of the truth (without excluding from among them those most capable of gathering from an idea, through the power of their understanding, all the light that may show it clearly and convincingly to others): if the idea does not awaken the mysterious echo of the heart within them, if it does not agree with their acts, can you tell me how much the idea is worth to them for the reality of life—for that reality which is not a cold flat stone upon which inscriptions are engraved, but a living and palpitating embryo of sentiment and action? . . .

§ 138. *Superficial conversions. The parts played by the imagination and the sensibility in conversions*

It is easy to observe how persons who, with complete sincerity of thought, pass from one pole to the other in the world of ideas, remain absolutely the same if one is to judge them by the tenor of their outward personality as it is seen in action, even when the change in these ideas is of a moral nature. If they are Jewish first, and then Christian, their Christianity will possess the rigidity and dryness which is transmitted to the soul through the ferule of the Old Testament. If they are dogmatists first and free-thinkers



afterwards, their free thought will have in it the intolerance characteristic of one who considers himself the possessor of the eternal and exclusive truth. Such is the practical worthlessness of a purely intellectual conversion, as incapable of bringing a tear to the eyes as it is of establishing or dissolving a habit.

But the imagination and the sensibility, solidary agents of the most profound changes which the substance of our character undergoes, are persistent and energetic forces which the idea needs to gain its superiority and to put the will on the road to efficacious conversion. They are also the source of vain conversions, vainer than those which pure understanding causes, because beneath them there is not even the rational resistance of a logical conviction, although it may be incapable of translating itself into life and action. These are ephemeral and deceitful conversions which issue from a slight tremor of the heart or from a blaze of the fickle fantasy; conversions in which a person with but little personality yields, like an unstable body, to the impression he receives from every new act which he witnesses, from the new book which he reads, from the new people with whom he associates. The vigilant authority of reason, that by itself would never produce anything but inert convictions, is necessary in order that one may raise himself above each one of these impressions by calmly appreciating its object, by endeavoring to retain and deepen it and thus convert it into a lasting sentiment and firm will, if its object merits this, or, on the other hand, to discard it, if it is found unworthy of preservation. But reason, however, will always be the irreplaceable sovereign, without whose power an acquired belief will never be anything except blind faith or flaccid sentimentalism.

§ 139. *An idea may arouse a sentiment. Contradictions. All human passion carries within itself the germ of dissolution*

Moreover, if the pure idea does not succeed in replacing the sentiment, or in doing what the latter can, it may, cleverly and perseveringly, incite and arouse the sentiment. By considering the situation, accumulating excitements and stimuli, entering into an alliance with time, which silently bores rocks with the help of drops of water, avoiding hostile temptations, nursing with solicitous care the timid, incipient emotion, like one who needs a fire, in order to take advantage of the one little spark he has, gathers twigs, arranges them well, and breathes upon it carefully and delicately with his lips until he sees them burst into flame: thus does the pure, cold idea succeed in wresting from the remiss heart the fire of love to complement it.

To conquer a passion that subjugates us and to voluntarily rear in its place another passion is a heroic but not chimerical determination. And within the very bosom of that passion which has to be uprooted and replaced, the will, perhaps, will find the point of departure, the corner-stone, the fertile seed with which to reach to the new and opposite passion. Because our personal complexity is reproduced in all that happens within us, a sentiment, a habit and a tendency of our character are so many more complicated considerations around which elements of the most varying and dissimilar nature assemble and organize themselves. Thus, for instance, an impure passion, a pernicious habit, a misguided will, may contain separable elements of moral beauty. These are not lacking in the ferocity of hatred, nor in the

sordidness of fallacies, nor in the brutality of lusts. It is the business of psychologists and moralists to discover those allies of theirs, contained in the passion or the habit from which they propose to free a soul, and to fight them in their own breasts and lay the foundations of regeneration upon the very nape of the enemy's neck.

And what unheard-of contradictions we should discover, if we were to explore this complexity in the depths of each sentiment! What amazing groupings this chemistry of the heart reveals! . . . Are there any affinities that it does not manifest and realize? Are there any apparent repulsions that it does not conquer? Pleasure and pain, love and hate, are more opposite in the sphere of abstraction and language than in that of concrete and living reality.

How much has been said about the difficulty of classifying in terms of grief or pleasure the sentiment of melancholy contemplation, of forlorn and languid dreaming! Is melancholy happiness, or is it grief? . . . In the paroxysm of sensuality, when the separated cells move the *fury and desperation* of which Lucretius spoke; and in the complacency with which the spectator of a tragedy lets his tears flow, wounded by the caressing, sharp edges of Art; and in the voluptuosity of the palate of the *glutton of bitterness*; and in that other strange voluptuosity of the one who scratches his wounds in order to awaken suffering and to enjoy their inflammation; and in the smile with which the martyr, who knows that martyrdom is the gateway to happiness, shines from among the flames of the stake; and in the sarcasm with which the satiric poet mixes the bitterness of his injury with the mirth of his jesting—in all these cases, the two poles of sensibility touch each other and are identified. Now it is pleasure which takes advantage of pain and makes it its slave; now it is pain which creeps upon the

bosom of pleasure and lives there on the sap that it takes from it, as a viper, crawling at night into the bed of a wet nurse, nourishes itself at the woman's breasts.

Love and hate are not exempt from this natural, humorous force that takes pleasure in uniting the most opposite sentiments. That love and hate are contained in the same impulse of the soul is well known by the person whose love is capable of outliving betrayal, but incapable of controlling the roar of honor or the clamor of vengeance for lost happiness: Lancioto knew it when Francesca read the fatal book, Othello felt it, before the sleeping Desdemona. A painter of antiquity knew how to show that the tenderness of a mother may fuse with the cruelty of a homicide, when he portrayed in the face of Medea both the will that murders and the will that implores, the treacherous intent and the caress. Pride and humility are enemies that I have seen embrace each other many times through words and gestures which revealed the soul of an ascetic, a Baptist or a Puritan. Nothing is more contradictory than the combination of desolate fear and a wrathful impulse, but the soldier who enters the battle-field for the first time and is driven by anguish and confusion to rush headlong, with closed eyes, into the most deadly part of it, does he not draw from an excess of weakness the impetus of temerity? Nothing is apparently more irreconcilable than the sentiment of deep admiration and that of mocking laughter, an expression of scorn, and yet you have to only reread certain scenes from *Don Quixote* in order to feel this very paradoxical sentiment within you.

The contradiction appears clearly in those soul-situations in which two antagonistic forces of equivalent power intervene. But in the complexity of any personal sentiment, there always exists the contradictory, discordant note which,

because it is weak and concealed, is not evident, but submerged in the harmony of the whole. How is passion born in the soul? Just as the crowd which rises at the passing of a banner or a prophet. The stimulus of an emotion, endowed with the mysterious power of proselytism and cordiality, gathers within us vague and scattered elements, marshals them to a goal and arouses them to action. Among the elements grouped in such a manner, there are faithful ones, immovable and sure; but there are also those that do not adhere without reservations and do not remain without reluctance or malice. There are in the heterogeneous crowd: the indolent persons, the criminals, the possible fugitives from justice, the possible traitors. What does it matter that one does not perceive them while passion marches toward its goal, like a horde impassioned with a madness for war? They go within it; and there is no passion in whose realms these soldiers do not fight. One can gather from this that in all human passion there are some elements opposite in character from its whole. Meditate on this, and translate it in terms of this other proposition, as suggestive, when you want to maintain and to strengthen a certain passion, a certain organized force in your soul, as when you desire to weaken and conquer it: *All human passion carries within itself the germ of its dissolution.*

In the depth of the most ardent love, of the faith most enslaved by its object, there is a critical *viciousness*, a tendency to distrust and doubt: like the salamander that used to live in flames, like the grain of dust that always forms the nucleus of the drop of water. In the depth of the coldest and most barren scepticism, one that is deeply rooted in the solidity of reason, there is a tremor of unconscious ideality, there is a thread of illusion and faith, which may be the vain splinter lost in the dust of the road or the

vestige left by an officious spider, that will some day return to its task.

§ 140. *Lucretia and the magician*

Artemius, mayor of Augostolide in Egypt, about the time of the fall of Rome, was a Christian neophyte. Under the shadow of his stern old-age, Lucretia lived as his pupil. Her father, who died during her childhood, had been Artemius' fellow-soldier and friend. This Lucretia lived up to the splendor of the name she bore: she even enhanced it because of a quality so candid, calm and beautiful that it reflected her beatific virtue. One day there arrived at Artemius' house a religious man belonging to some Oriental cult: a Brahmin, an astrologer, or perhaps a Chaldaic magician, one of those who roamed about the Roman world, adding to their primitive knowledge fragments of Hellenic culture and professing the arts of divination and enchantment. The mayor received him graciously; the religion of these Oriental Christians was accustomed to embrace witchcraft with fondness. On hearing the magician say that among the powers of his science was that of exposing the content of the soul's center, most remote from common knowledge, Artemius made Lucretia come forward, moved by the desire to know what marvelous form the essence of her unusual candor took in the depths of her soul. The magician declared that he needed only a goblet, that she herself should fill with her own hand, and under the transparency of the water, he would see painted, as if in a clear mirror, the soul of Lucretia.

"Let us see," said Artemius, "what star of innocent brilliancy, what crystalline spring, what gentle lamb, occupies the depths of this soul. . . ."

The goblet was brought in. Lucretia filled it to the brim with water; then the magician concentrated his glance on the goblet while the maiden and her guardian waited anxiously to hear what he said.

"In the first place," he began, "I see, as in all the souls I have penetrated with this second sight of mine, a chasm or abyss comparable to those that obstruct the way of the traveler through rugged mountain paths. And there in the depths, in the depths . . ." He interrupted himself, hesitating a moment. "Shall I say it?" he asked. And as Artemius nodded his head, "Well, what I see," he continued, "in the depths of that abyss, is a happy, lively and glittering courtesan. She is lying under a high canopy, like those from Tyre, and she sleeps. She is dressed all in purple, with the looseness and transparency that, better than nakedness, serve as a lance of provocation. A fire of voluptuousness shoots from her eyes, veiled with sleep, and glows in the corners of her lips like two flames, between which blooms the most divine and most infernal smile that I have ever seen. Her head rests on one of her bare arms. Carelessly she raises the other, covered with bracelets which represent writhing vipers, and between her thumb and index finger she holds a small pebble, blood-like in color, which is one of Aphrodite's symbols. That is what this soul has as a virtuality, in expectancy, in that which is still without being, finally, Artemius, in the shadow of what you wished to know through my arts. . . ."

"Vile impostor," cried Lucretia, her eyes filled with tears, "is this your science? Is your knowledge infamy? Bring a red-hot coal to prove whether an untruthful word passes my lips, and listen and see if there dwells in me any intention or feeling that is in accordance with the image that you pretend to have seen within my soul!"

"Hush, poor Lucretia," argued the magician, "must you perhaps know it? You speak the truth, and I too."

"Would it be right then," asked Artemius, "to disregard the promises which Lucretia's nature seems to hold, and to prepare ourselves for disappointment?"

"I do not agree with you," replied the magician, "for who can know whether the courtesan within her will ever awaken?"

"I say it in case she does awaken," added Artemius.

"Sir," replied the magician, "granted that this may happen, I have also looked into the depths of the soul of that sleeping hetaira who lies in the depths of Lucretia's soul, and I saw another abyss, and in the midst of the abyss a light, and as though enveloped and suspended in that light, a very soft creature, so white that snow itself might envy her whiteness. Beside this goddess, this sexless woman, this pure spirit, you would think the splendor of Lucretia's virtue just a shadow—as the courtesan within her lingers in her eyes, this other soul sleeps within the courtesan." . . .

"I infer from this," said the mayor, "that even with the awakening of the courtesan we may still keep our cherished hopes in Lucretia? Let us thank God, since we already find in the straying of her virtue the road of her sanctity."

"Yes," the magician said, "but do not forget that, as in the others, there is in the soul of this angelic form an abyss into which I can look."

"And who," asked Artemius, "is the sleeper in this abyss?"

"I would tell you," answered the magician, "if it were proper to display a picture of abomination in Lucretia's presence. Think of the scene of Lucius' Corinthian Pasifae, think of a woman of such a character that, in comparison with her, the first courtesan will be, in degree of virtue, what Lucretia is in comparsion with the first courtesan."



"You throw me in a sea of confusions!" broke in Artemius. "What strange creature is this that friendship has placed in my hands? . . ."

"Do not be astonished," the magician said finally, hastening to reassure Lucretia, who remained in a painful stupor, "she is not an extraordinary being, neither are the things that you have seen through my eyes supernatural or strange. With the hundred fiends that always slept in the hidden part of his being, every blessed one ascended to glory, and with the hundred righteous ones that never awoke in the depths of himself, every reprobate went down to his damnation. Artemius, never stimulate trustworthiness in the just, nor distrust in the fallen; all have dissimilar guests hidden in their soul. There are times when goodness consists in awakening some one of those guests; but there are others (and this is important for you) when to disturb their sleep would be temerity or a useless risk. Sleep lives in an atmosphere of silence; innocence is the silence of the soul. May there be silence in Lucretia's heart!" . . .

§ 141. *Before the walls of a jail. The heroic criminal. A moment's fatality. The epileptic in a tomb*

As I look at the walls that separate the jail from human society, how many times have I felt like disputing in the depths of my mind, in the wild background where ideas have no law, this tenacious thought: how many things could *life* (which is the pursuit of the natural enjoyment of liberty, action and love) have done with many of those souls shut off from life, like subterranean water which neither flows nor sends its vapors to the sky! How much could be accomplished with them by a great impulse of pas-

sion, a great stimulus, a great enthusiasm, an open horizon, or an *intoxication* with joy and sunshine? . . .

And when reading about a crime that makes us measure the abyss of a vicious soul, *tragic* through the unfortunate strength of perversity and hate, how many times have I experienced a sentiment of admiration, even more intense perhaps than that of an abhorrence for evil . . . I feel . . . how shall I say it? . . . a certain *envy*, an *envy* comparable to that which one might experience while witnessing the devastating fierceness of the hurricane, or the angry sea, or the avalanche that demolishes houses and trees; an envy experienced by one seeking a new motive force, a new material energy with which to magnify the work and power of men.

In the quietude, in the wasted accumulated energy that is gathered in a jail, there is vital power of will and passion which, if guided to a lofty goal, would be enough to animate and carry along, with a tremendous dynamism, that human flock which I see passing under my window whenever I raise my eyes, most of whom are useless for good and useless for evil: vain dust agitated by egoism and fear!

The light which suddenly announces the coming of the Spirit is nearer to that dark night than to this pale penumbra. . . . And it is easier to make a Peter the Hermit, or a Girolamo Savonarola, or a Bartolomé Las Casas of an impassioned criminal than of a righteous man who knows only cold righteousness, founded on interest and discretion. When one sets fire to a forest, a vegetation totally different from that which was there before, grows from the ashes of the fire. It is then that the hidden seeds, subdued until that time by those which previously grew in the forest, manifest themselves and develop, thanks to the fertility of the soil,

prodigious in itself, which gave splendid prosperity to the former and will give it, no less frankly and freely, to the latter. Whether you call the former the seeds of heroic wickedness and the latter, those of heroic virtue, there is an eternal hope attached to the *strong* soul, a state of excellence that belongs to the wicked as well as to the good. The soil, rich in warmth and sap, is propitious to many seeds.

If in the conflict between two antithetical powers which dispute the government of the soul, one is conquered, the superstition of certain savages that the valor and strength of the conquered passes to the soul of the victor, becomes a reality. What other meaning is there in the observation that it is in the repentance and dread following guilt that sanctity always gathered the richest harvest, and that the intensity of virtue grows in proportion to the cause for repentance?

But besides the powerful and extraordinary energies, forever annulled by their first application to evil: apparent even in the most common crime, how tragic is the condition which places the destiny of a life under the yoke of what may be fatal in the suggestion of perversity! . . . Crime collects a large part of its ration of souls from within the immense multitude of those who cross the fearful fields of life without their own fixed form of personality, from among those who wander about in uncertainty and indifference, neutral to those momentary impulses which impel people toward evil or raise them to glory. Frequently the culprit possessed until the precise moment of his offense what I would call a *drowsy conscience*, a very common kind. He was up to that moment neither good nor bad. He was one who is dejected because of his helplessness and misery and roams about the streets one night, without enough determination to do anything worth while. He sees through

a window a heap of gold and next to it a defenseless man; an evil demon speaks to his ear and he steals and murders. Immediately after the temptation and guilt, follows the everlasting social *necessity* of ignominy. If chance had placed him before a house which was on fire and he had seen there on the top floor a woman or child about to perish in the flames, perhaps a good angel would have talked to his ear and he would have become a hero—after such a beginning he would probably have persisted in a virtuous life and forever would have enjoyed dignity and glory.

With what should I compare what I have so often felt on seeing a strong, young man enter the doors of the house of bitter peace, the house of slavery and shame, never to leave, or perhaps to leave with white hair? I compare it to the feeling of anguish we experience on facing the horrible fatality of the epileptic who looks exactly like a corpse and is carried to the grave while still alive. Perhaps the epileptic would have awakened to live a long life; perhaps his life would have been good and beautiful! . . . And his desperation when he recovers consciousness in such a terrifying confinement? . . . It is certain that this desperation lasts a moment—a moment and no longer. For if one might doubt whether this man was dead before he was buried, once he has passed an hour in that confinement, without light or air, who would doubt that he is really dead? . . .

§ 142. *Regressive temptations at the beginning of conversion*

If once you have started on the road of conversion, if once your will is guided in a new direction and you find yourself at some time turning to the old ways, and you notice that one of your thoughts or your actions interferes with the course of your purpose, then hasten to rectify this

thought or action; but do not be dismayed when such opposition occurs, nor consider lost the effort which may have made you abandon your previous way of living. A moral transformation which has not taken place through the slow work of time and habit, but rather through the inspiration and force of the will, imposes on the soul a hurried task of disassociation to break away from old habits, and another task, no less active, of coördination and discipline, so as to establish new and effective habits. This double task is not accomplished without interruptions or without a struggle. Some reactionary temptation, some backward step, some strong memory endowed with executive strength, are in this process inevitable obstacles. The beginning of reform and the first significant voluntary effort undoubtedly establish a certain connection of tendencies, without which an isolated idea would not have the strength to express itself; but this connection does not completely embrace all of the contents of the soul. Even when a regenerating tendency has accomplished an act demonstrating authority, it still needs to organize its republic and to subdue the reactionary and unruly propensities. There is, necessarily, an intermediate period during which the retreating enemy generally turns about and gains perhaps some ephemeral triumph. One sees the image of the uncertainties of this moral state in Nature's own transformations when a transition occurs suddenly, rather than harmoniously as Nature usually prefers: one sees how, in the change from childhood to adolescence, which is an instance of a natural and sudden change, the child reappears at certain moments in the almost-adolescent individual and exhibits himself through juvenile pranks in the midst of an early seriousness, until finally the force which pushes life forward discards those last vestiges of an age which has passed.

§ 143. *An ample power of expression as an incentive to false changes of ideas*

To summarize what we have said: a complete and effective conversion requires a conviction rationally acquired, and a deep, persistent feeling. To rouse and to maintain the latter, if it does not appear spontaneously, is a costly desire, but one that is not beyond the power of the will. When one of these two elements is lacking, the conversion is blind or paralytic, and when one of the two is weak, it sees only as if by flashes of lightning, or acts as if in spasmodic movements.

In writers and orators, both masters and slaves of words, docility to the changing suggestions of environment (whence ephemeral conversions are born, without intellectual consistency, without the true exercise of judgment or active accompaniment of the will) is generally a disadvantage inherent in an ample and masterly power of expression, more apt, by its peculiar nature, to gather the things that surround it and to impart brilliancy to them than to gather its contents from the depths of the personality of the orator or writer himself. The inconsistency of thought, or rather of words, which dignifies and magnifies itself in great expressive souls until it resembles the supreme faculty of the early *epic* poet, of the almost impersonal soul, is like a faithful, multiform resonance of the thoughts and feelings of others, like the very center of a collective soul, synthesized in the interpreter's vibrant voice.

Thus, in a way that reminds one of the social *epiphany* of the songs of epic ages, there resounded above the tremendous agitation of the past century Victor Hugo's passionate word, successively linked with the different doctrines,

with the opposing moral theories which attracted his contemporaries. He was not identified with these contradictory thoughts so much by the inner development of his own mind and his laborious personal evolution (as in the case of Goethe), as by an immediate and apparently unconscious reverberation of the clamor from without. In Victor Hugo's *congenital* inconsistency one does not come across, except at rare moments, the majestic dynamics of thought, master of itself, which, consecrated to the integration of its truth, seeks it in the depths of things with an exclusive and persistent desire. But even so, there is in this inconsistency something infinitely higher than mere versatility. There is in it the grandeur of a *cyclical* spirit, who thinks successively with everyone, because he summarizes all, and attracts to his immense verbal organ all the ideas, because he is capable of expressing the luminous essence of them all.

#### § 144. *Venal apostasies*

Among the simulachra, more or less inane and superficial, but still sincere, of a true and thorough conversion, that conversion in which the intelligence, sensibility and will embrace one another lovingly—there are those which are a premeditated deceit, conscious and artful fiction; there are the forms of narrow apostasy, daughter of interest, of whom it may be said that ideas, the *Mothers* that rule the movement of things in a sublime beatitude, degenerate into cynical procuresses in the pleasures and profits of the world.

An idea, incarnated in reality, is a religion, is a school, is a party, is an academy or a cenacle; it is an active human communion, with its portion of persecution or authority, of proscriptions or dignities. Across the fields where ideas hoist

their flags, the crowd of the tempted pass from misfortune to prosperity, from discredit to power, or to remain, thanks to change, in power and prosperity: from the nameless disillusioned persons who squander the generous enthusiasm of their youth for crumbs from the tables of the powerful, to the sagacious ruler, the clever man of action for whom ideas are indifferent instruments of his authority, masks which opportunity puts on and takes off every day: of which kind Talleyrand is perhaps the typical example. It will be well not to forget, in spite of it all, that the appearance of immovable fidelity to one idea often masks the same falsity and the same mercenary stimulus that are evident in any ordinary apostasy.

The unfaithful and covetous person degrades and converts into a vile industry not only the ability for action, the science and aptitude to govern men, but also a superiority more ideal and more elevated in its essence from low human realities: the superiority of the thinker or the artist who possesses the gift of persuading and moving men or of creating the beautiful. The infidelity resulting from egoism in these cases appears even more abominable. It is the ignominy of the venal writer, of the mercenary poet, whether you call him a Paolo Giovo, a Monti or a Lebrun, and whether they prostitute the gifts of inspiration for the gold that falls from the hands of a prince or for that which is collected at popular meetings.

§ 145. *The passion of Peregrine. Apostasy due to avarice for fame.* False strength, false originality

A kind of infidelity not as ignoble as that which engenders the eagerness for common profits, is that which is inspired by



the ambition for prestige or renown, whether it be shifting the sincerity of thought toward some stupendous novelty, or, on the contrary, toward the opinion that prevails by the strength of tradition and custom.

Antiquity kept and Lucian tied it to the oar of his satire, the memory of that philosopher from Paros named Peregrine, a living image of this kind of inconsequence, who, because of his symbolic death, represents all the tormented legion of those souls that do not find contentment or repose in any determined thought, in any form of life. Peregrine bore in his soul the same malady as that of the incendiary of Ephesus: a vain avarice for fame. He thought that he would realize his dream by attaching himself to some popular doctrine, or by the opportunity that this doctrine would give him to place his own personality in the foreground. He went from one to another of the schools of the Sophists, then he hastened toward the clamor which the faith of the Christians produced. He tried afterwards to attract attention by becoming a Cynic, until his lamentable passion drove him to surrender his life for the sake of fame. At some public games, so that the multitude would see him and marvel, he cast himself headlong into the flames of a bonfire. Burned and his ashes scattered—such was the death of him who, incapable of conviction, had already scattered his soul to the winds.

Peregrine's weakness is one of those passions that cause the greatest harm to the sincerity of thought, because it has for its aim, not that noble kind of fame which is satisfied with the approbation of the best souls while it awaits the perennial sanction of time (a most certain compensator of truth), but a juggleresque and ephemeral fame. This sacrifice of the integrity of thought to a vain noise makes

itself evident by two boastful manifestations: *false strength* and *false originality*.

*False strength* consists in distorting judgment by carrying an idea which, when first discovered, expressed truth faithfully, to extremes where it loses its substance and virtue. And this occurs not on account of an overflowing spontaneity of passion, which may be a sublime excess, but by a conscious effort for effect, to appear on a level with the multitude whose primitive nature excludes that sense of proportion and nuances which is the gift that ancient Nemesis makes to superior minds. Because strength of the mind is not the fatal and impetuous energy which runs along ignorant of its end, but the energy that assures itself by an eagle's glance, and, once it perceives the summit where truth and harmony dwell, there it slows down the impetus of affirmation, like the herculean hand that restrains, whenever it wishes, the chariot that it drives.

*False originality* tends, in its turn, to discard the loyal examination of reason in order to seek directly and with artificial intention the opposite of the authorized word or the antipode of the position held by the majority, without considering that the originality of greatest merit is that which presents a *personality* in what is said or done, although this thought or this action, reduced to its abstract form of *ideas*, does not diverge from a known precedent. Where there is a profound spirit of personality, where the idea has been thought and felt anew with the efficiency of creative energy, there will always be a virtue and a spirit that will not resemble anything that preceded it; since the soul has stamped its image there, and only in the mass of souls are there those like coins of specified value, which can be exchanged for others without any difference.

§ 146. *The paradox of originality*

. . . But not even in those which we call common souls are there any that can be exchanged without any difference. Originality is the truth of man.

There is nothing more rare than originality in the expression of sentiment; but nothing more common than the originality of sentiment itself. In the manner of feeling there is no one who is not original; there is no one that feels exactly like anyone else. The absence of originality in that which one writes is nothing but the incompetence to reflect and set down the truth of that which is felt.

Imagine yourself before the most common case of a passionate act, before the crime which newspapers record every day. Why did the criminal kill? Why did he steal? Why was honor stained? What moved him to commit the crime—hate, arrogance, avarice, sensuality, egoism? . . . No; those are dead abstractions. Say that *his* hate, *his* arrogance, *his* avarice, *his* sensuality, *his* egoism stimulated him—*his* emotions, unique forces, unique in the eternity of time and in the infinity of the world. No one hates, nor has hated, nor will hate exactly as he has. No one ever had or will have avarice precisely equal to his, nor arrogance which could be identified without any reservations with his. Generations may multiply like the waves of the sea, Humanity may spread through a thousand planets, yet never will a love like mine or a hate exactly like mine be reproduced in any created soul. My love and my hate might find resemblances, but never could they find equals. Each sentiment, even the smallest, of even the poorest heart, is a new and different scene in the spectacle which the divine Spectator gives Himself. Each minute of my life which falls into the abyss of

eternity shatters a mould that will never again be cast. And why are you astonished? Don't you know that in the immensity of the forest there are no two leaves exactly alike, that in the wide expanse of the Ocean there are no two drops entirely equal? . . . Behold the stars of the firmament, how many among them seem alike, like so many other luminous dots! And yet each one of them is a world! Imagine how unlike they must be! . . . When the thought of your smallness within the whole of creation distresses you, defend yourself with this perhaps consoling reflection: such as you may be, as short a time as you may live, you are in each instant of your existence, a unique, exclusive originality and you represent in the immense whole a necessary element, because of the impossibility of substituting it, in an order into which nothing without a unique meaning or purpose goes.

Never will a real and living sentiment be reproduced from one to another soul without modification: When I say "my love," when I say "my hate," referring to some sentiment of mine, that some definite person or thing has inspired within me, I do not refer to two simple and elemental tendencies of my sensibility, but, with each one of those words, I give a classification to a group of internal elements that join within me toward a certain finality, following a certain harmony of emotions, of appetites, of ideas, of memories, of unconscious impulses, characteristic of and inseparable from my intimate history. The total complexity of our being is reproduced in any manifestation of our moral nature, in any manifestation of our sentiments, as each one of these is, like ourselves, a unique order, a character.

Establishing the nuances of ancient heroism, Plutarch noted the great difference between one strength and another, between that of Alcibiades and that of Epaminondas; between one prudence and another, between that of Themis-

tocles and that of Aristides; between one justice and another, between that of Numa and that of Agesilao. But for these differences to exist, it is not necessary that the sentiment which manifests them be a powerful or noble one, or that it be contained in the organization of a powerful personality. It is enough that the sentiment be real, it is enough that it be intertwined in the living web of a soul. How much monotony there seems to be in the hearts and histories of men! But in truth, what an infinite variety! Human lives, seen from a distance and as a whole, must all appear similar, like the beasts of a herd, like the waves of a river, like the ears of corn on a plantation. It has often been said that if we were permitted to open those thousands of letters that come in a bag of mail we would be astonished at the similarity which would permit us to classify in a few pigeon-holes the psychological depth of that multitude of personal documents: everywhere the same soul-situations, the same sorrows, the same hopes, the same vehement desires. . . . Such is the illusion of language! In truth, each one of those letters leaves behind it a unique sentiment, an originality, a state of consciousness, a singular case that can not be substituted by any in the other letters. Words (and especially words set on paper by commonplace hands) are not able to express those infinite nuances. Language, the instrument of social communication, is made to signify classes, species, qualities common to similar representations. Language expresses what is *impersonal* in emotion; never will it express what is *personal*—the most subtle, the most delicate, the deepest and the most ineffable things of emotion. Between the reality of my intimate being, which I call *love*, and that of your being which you call love, stands our personal disparity as a difference. To clear up this difference by means of words; to evoke in me, by means of them, the

*complete* image of your love, and in you the *complete* image of mine, would be an aim comparable to that of him who would resolve to fill a space with irregular stones and would pledge himself not to leave a gap between them. Stones, irregular stones with which we try to cover intellectual spaces, such are words.

The superiority of the writer who publicly examines his own soul, who creates a fictional or dramatic character, making him express himself in such a way that an individual tone, from which the illusion of life is born, arises vigorously from his depths—this superiority consists in overcoming, as far as the nature of things allows, the limitation of language. It consists in taming language, as far as possible, so that it may express an *individual singularity*, without which sentiment is nothing more than an abstract and cold concept. The triumph of a poet consists in grouping his words in such a way that they give the approximate expression to his individuality of sentiment, thanks to the mysterious suggestion that issues from the group of words that the genius chooses and places together—just as a body with new qualities appears from a chemical synthesis, a body that is more than the sum of the characteristics of its components.

If all those who write succeed in transferring to paper the clear image and, therefore, the differential note of what they feel, there would not be any writer that was not original, because everybody feels something exclusively *his own*; there are no two souls that reflect an impression identically. That is why literary originality depends, in the first place, upon the sincerity with which the writer manifests the depths of his spirit and, in the second place, upon the precision with which he succeeds in defining whatever is unique and personal in his imagination and his affections. Sincerity and precision are springs of originality.

With the *appearance* of a great writer always comes the revelation of new affective tonalities, of new vibrations of emotion. The fact is that he succeeded in expressing *his own* ideas with marvelous precision; others have experienced before the same object, states of soul perhaps not less rich in originality, perhaps not less fertile in interest; but, since they did not find a way to express them, condemned them to silence, or rather were considered mediocre writers only because they did not know (as the genius knows) how to translate into words *nearly all* that they felt, for *all* exceeds the capacity of words.

If the substance of lyric poetry and of the psychology of fictional characters is free from the possibility of ever being exhausted with the passing of time, this is due to the complexity and originality of all real sentiments. For although any manifestation of human nature must always be limited to a certain number of fundamental and eternal sentiments; although the last poet dies singing that which the first one sang in the blossoming childhood of the world, each sentiment will always take from the individual soul in which it may appear, not only the stamp of the age and the race, but also the stamp of personality; and the poet of genius, on converting into images the manner in which a sentiment is manifested in his soul, will always know how to embody that principle of *individualization*, that personal originality of sentiment.

§ 147. *Versatility of thought that ends in a firm and sure conviction*

An extreme versatility of ideas usually ends in a conviction firmer and more secure than a rock. And the fact is that this wandering of the mind was not a sign of in-

capacity to believe, or absence of a distinct personality. It was, on the contrary, that presentiment of faith which persuades one not to be content except with a just and strong faith. It was the anxiety of one who searches for his own path and is restless until he finds it.

The traveler takes a road and quits it in a short while for another upon which again he does not continue. The onlooker may consider him lazy or vacillating. Then the traveler happens to find the direction which he wanted and with the surety of the somnambulist, without even diverting his gaze, continues imperturbable—like the *baqueano* in the virgin soils of America.

Saint Justine, father of the Christian apologists, offers an example of this way of reaching, as if by successive trials and eliminations, the road on which one becomes thoroughly orientated. That remarkable man was at first a pagan. Later, abandoning the gods for the sake of philosophy, he wandered about and passed from one to another of the schools of his time, without being convinced either by the ideas of Zeno or those of the Peripatetics, or those of the Pythagoreans. He was converted later to Christianity and this time his spirit was inrooted and reposed forever in the belief, till finally he enriched his great love with his own martyrdom. But that eager prying of his mind was not useless for the temperament and the personal seal that his definite faith took from it. For from his previous restless questionings there remained in the depths of his soul, like a ferment that seasons and warms a faith, based on the virile audacity of independent reason, a faith that in the first "Apology" makes him utter these sublime words, whose meaning penetrates, like a subtle blade, into the root of the intolerance of dogma: *Whosoever has lived according to reason deserves the name of Christian.*



§ 148. *Life is a supreme art*

He who, voluntarily and reflectively, contributes to the renovation of his spiritual life—what does he do if not to continue the work, incapable of a definite end, that began for him when he learned to take his first step, to utter his first word, to control his impulses for the first time? What else is education if not the art of ordered and progressive transformation of personality, an art that, after being under outside jurisdiction, becomes autonomous and that, fully conceived, in this second phase of its development extends from the drawing of a line, from the modification of an idea, a sentiment or a habit, to the widest and most profound reforms, to full *conversions*, which, similar to those that occurred through theological *grace*, gives a new meaning to life, a new orientation, and, as it were, extinguishes the soul that was within us and lights another soul? Supreme art which synthetizes the best of our nature, the dignity of our fate, all that which elevates us over the condition of a thing or of a brute; art which converts us, not into masters of Destiny, because this is not possible for men and not even for gods, but into her competitors and rivals, after having ceased to be her slaves.

Only because we consider ourselves capable of limiting the influence that those forces we call *fate* exert over our personality and our life, are we justified in considering ourselves nobler creatures than the ox that plows our fields, the horse that we ride or the dog that licks our feet. On account of this privilege that elevates us to a double sublimity, both that of the well-disciplined souls and that of the rebel, we react against our innate propensities and sometimes prevent their triumph; we resist the influence of the things that surround

us, we control natural or acquired habits and, thanks to the tactics of the will, placed at the service of intelligence, we acquire new habits; we adapt our life to a social order that we reciprocally modify by adapting it to our desires for innovation and improvement; we foresee the conditions that will surround us in the future and we act accordingly; we control our emotions and the nature of our view of things. We place our hand upon the very roots where passion is born; and even the blind and mysterious force of instinct, that represents the iron circle of animalism, becomes in us plastic and modifiable because it is governed and, as it were, penetrated by the lofty virtue of our thought.

This capacity, this energy, is found potentially in every person, but it is scarcely perceptible in an immense number of people. It scarcely becomes, except to a very slight degree, reality and action, and only in a select few does it contribute, in a conscious and systematic way, toward self-development. It would appear in the plenitude of its power if every one of us would agree in considering life as a work of constant and orderly progress in which the soul advances by its quality and mode of existence, as one who rises in public life to preëminence and fortune.

But how few are those who consecrate themselves to such a task with the love and vehemence of the artist, since they have not consecrated themselves to it even with the devotion of believers in an imperative norm of morality! Because there is true art in life, an art superior to any other. Great lives, in which the will conquers and makes plastic Nature's material, following a model which glows meanwhile in the mind, are real works of art, patterns of a supreme craft, to which the human substance conforms, like words to metre, stones to sculpture, colors to canvas. Thus in Goethe the work of his life resembles a statue, a statue where the tenacious and

rhythmical effort of the will, firm as a chisel with a diamond point, carves an ideal of perfection, serene, noble and harmonious. The life of St. Francis Assisi is *composed* like a tender and sublime music. To find an image for the life of such monarchs as Augustus or Charlemagne, it would be necessary to imagine one of those cyclical monuments of architecture that incarnates in stone the genius of a civilization: a classic temple or a Christian basilica. The art of Franklin's life is that of a machine where the wise and ingenious application of means to a useful end and the economy of power reach that degree of convenience and precision in which utility assumes a certain character of beauty.

§ 149. *The first instrument of regeneration is the hope of attaining it*

The first instrument of regeneration is the hope of attaining it. Every plan for education, for reform, for conversion—and I shall say even more: everyone who wishes to carry out such a plan should begin by cultivating *faith in himself* and then implanting it in others. It is the preliminary and indispensable operation of the forger who heats the hard metal to make it more malleable. And, of course, the only education that is efficacious and useful is that which impresses the individual with the fact that his fundamental trait, his differentiating mark as a human being, is his power of transforming and renewing himself, overcoming, through his intelligence and his will, the forces that conspire to keep him in an inferior state, whether they be suffering, guilt, ignorance, slavery or fear.

A poor antecedent for an enterprise of moral reform is to try to belittle the individual's idea of himself and to make him appear in his own eyes as unworthy of triumph. The

teacher and the healer of souls, who use such a method either unintentionally, because they do not know better, or, because of distorted theories, destroy in the soul of the pupil, the sinner or the catechumen the basis of their authority that lives only on the stimulating faith. Perhaps with an opposite method the healer and teacher only confirm and perpetuate the evils that they found still tender and the resistance that they did not know how to overcome in the beginning with the art of love. Because, if there really can be a part that is dead and incapable of reanimation in a living soul, it is that part in which dwells despair, a *stigma* comparable to the *diabolic* one, which desiccated the flesh wherever it imprinted its stamp, leaving it like a lifeless thing.

I do not recommend the blind confidence in oneself that consists of thinking that triumph comes quickly, or that the road to it is a smooth one or that inherited tendencies can be ignored, or that the inimical powers which besiege us on all sides are despicable, or that temptation is without real value. It is that other kind of confidence that achieves its triumph after a persistent and costly effort and that encourages our chief aptitudes to further that effort, and that stimulates the will and strengthens it, emphasizing the imperative duty of exercising effort. Any other faith, any other optimism, is a fatal vanity, and like the pessimistic doubt which it resembles in being an extreme attitude toward life, it ends in lazy fatalism.

There are two voices in the tempting deceit: that which suggests to our ear, "All is easy," the opposite one which tells us, "All is futile." Only excess of confidence may sometimes bring us to our goal, may carry us in a flight to the summit, because even when our hope turns crazy, it is capable of great things, and the madness of hope usually is the force that makes miracles and prodigies, while, through the way of

mortal doubt, it is not possible to reach more than the reality of the deception that it anticipates and of the shadow that it casts.

§ 150. *Hope as light; the Will as force. Omnipotence of the will*

HOPE as guide and light; the WILL as force, and for the first objective and application of this force, our own personality, in order that we may remould ourselves and be always better and more powerful.

What is there within us that is exempt from the power of the will? Pain? Love? Invention? Faith? Enthusiasm? Sleep? Feelings? The functioning of our organism?

These are events and forces that seem to rise above our will, to act or not to act, to be or not to be, marking limits for it that can not be trespassed any more than the laws of Nature. But this marvelous energy of the will, that moves a phalanx of your finger as well as it remakes the physiognomy of the world in conformity with an image of your mind, also increases or decreases those forces that we think fatal, and when it manifests itself to a sublime degree, its intervention triumphs, so that it gives life to love or suffocates it, relieves pain, kindles faith, competes with the creative genius, watches in sleep, upsets the real impression of things, brings back health to the body or to the soul, and awakes from what is almost death, the impetus and capacity for life.

The will conquers pain and annihilates it in the Spartan boy who hides a cub under his mantle and utters no cry while the animal devours his abdomen; in the furnace where Mucio Scevola puts his hand and watches it burn "without moving his eyebrow or twitching his lips"; and in the martyrdom where Campanella, concentrating on his persistent

idea, keeps silent and does not suffer. Such was the basis of stoic pride, scorner of pain, that inspired the glorious phrase of Arria, the ethics of Epictetus and that reappears in modern times with Kant, to build, more firmly than ever, over the ruins of all dogma and tradition, the throne of the omnipotent Will.

In the mysterious alchemy of love, in the hidden beginnings of faith, things are confused in the most impenetrable and *demoniac* part of the soul, the Will is substituted perhaps for the spontaneity of instinct, it creates love where there is none, breaking the ice of indifference with iron blows, when the fire that melts is lacking. It tears out the living faith from the entrails of doubt, as the child is forced from the womb of his dead mother. So, for the pertinacity of attention and of habit, whoever wants to believe ends by believing; whoever has the will to love ends by falling in love. Pascal knew of this when he affirmed the virtue of a formula or of a rite to open the way to faith within a hesitant soul.

In the divine operations of genius, the Will not only accumulates the fuel that a sacred spark later inflames and consumes, but even the spark itself may emanate from the will, and the grace not very amply granted by Nature, the uncertain gift, the doubtful or hidden aptitude, are transfigured and enlarged by it till it resembles a creation of its own and so may sometimes become almost this. Demosthenes, Alfieri and those that we have already mentioned when speaking about a vocation that anticipates all indications of aptitude: Carracci the painter, Maiquez the comedian, are examples of the artist who conquers his first inferiority and whose most precious masterpiece seems to be his own genius. Invention is frequently, above all, an act of the will, like the one which, according to religious tradition, brought forth light and the world from primal darkness. And of course, this impetus to

break away from what is known and customary (and such is invention)—is it not one, because of its character and way of developing, with the impetus by which one separates the uniformity of instinct and of habit from the thoroughly voluntary act? . . . The Will gathers the material, the genius animates, provokes it and makes room for the mysterious spark, and once the idea upon which invention is based is found, it takes its ferule and rules the patient labor that develops and purifies the contents of the idea, either through dialectic development or through mechanical improvement or through literary execution. This is the last vigorous achievement which Carducci compares beautifully, in its relation to the poet's imagination, with the anxieties of the satyr, pursuer of the shy, illusive nymph in the mysterious woods.

The jurisdiction of the will may even determine our organic life. Think of Alexander's gesture when he and his army are tormented with great thirst. Water is brought to him in a helmet from a somewhat distant fountain and, to stimulate his soldiers to bear their suffering until reaching the fountain, he pours the water on the ground instead of drinking it, while his parched lips move perhaps instinctively, toward the water that evaporates in the hot air. . . . Weber's power to check or accelerate by conscious effort the palpitations of his heart is well known. Goethe, whose life is no less great than his genius, exalts the efficacy of the will as a defense for the health of the body by telling us how he once escaped from a contagious disease only by the imperious concentration of his mind on the idea of remaining immune. Sleep, the work of a magic process that takes place within us without our participation or consent, makes use of a beautiful way to pay its tribute to the power of the will. Psychologists have observed in the fictions of that magic, that an energetic act of the will, evoked by a dream, usually tears away the veil of sleep and

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the sleeper returns to the reality of life. Thus, even the mask, even the phantom of the Will, is efficient and powerful and conquers the shadows that sleep spreads over the intimate light of our nights.

§ 151. *The Granite Plain*

It was a boundless, granite plain; its color, gray; not a wrinkle on its surface, sad and deserted, sad and cold, under an indifferent sky, under a sky of lead. And there was on the plain a gigantic old man, wrinkled, livid, beardless; there was a gigantic old man standing, straight as a bare tree. And the eyes of this man were cold like the plain and the sky, and his nose was sharp and hard like a sickle, and his muscles were rigid like that granite ground, and his lips no thicker than the blade of a sword. And near the old man there were three children, all stiff with cold, weak, wretched; three poor children, trembling before the haughty, indifferent old man,

The old man had a small seed in the palm of one hand. The extended forefinger of his other hand seemed to press against the emptiness of the air as against a thing of bronze. He grasped one of the children by his feeble neck and showed him the seed in the palm of his hand, and with a voice like the chilling whistle of a gale he said, "Dig a hole for this seed." And then he released the boy's trembling body, that sounded like a bag filled with pebbles as it fell upon the granite plain.

"Father," he sobbed, "how can I dig a hole in this hard, rocky land?"

"Gnaw one," he answered with a voice like the chilling whistle of a gale; and he raised one foot and placed it upon the boy's weak neck; and the teeth of the poor child scraping the rock sounded like a knife on a grindstone. Thus a long, long time passed; so long, in fact, that the boy had opened a



hole in the rock as large as the hollow of a skull; but he kept on gnawing, gnawing always with a groan of agony; the poor boy gnawed under the foot of the old man as indifferent and immutable as the granite plain.

When the hole was large enough, the old man lifted his crushing foot; and if someone had been there he might have seen a still more pitiful sight: although the boy had white hair he was still a child. And the old man kicked him aside and lifted up the second boy who had been watching and trembling all the time.

"Gather some soil for the seed," he said.

"Father," asked the unfortunate boy, "where is there any soil?"

"There is some in the wind," he answered, "gather it"; and with his thumb and forefinger he opened the wretched jaws of the child and made him face the wind. The floating dust of the air gathered on his panting tongue and jaws, and then the child vomited the dust in the form of slime; and a long, long time passed, and the indifferent, immutable old man on the granite plain showed neither impatience, nor eagerness, nor mercy.

When the cavity of rock was filled to the brim, the old man threw the seed into it and flung the boy aside like a piece of dry rind, and he did not see that grief had turned the young head white. Then he picked up the last small boy and, pointing to the buried seed, he said, "You must water that seed."

"Father, where is there any water?" asked the boy, trembling with anguish.

"Weep. There is water in your eyes," he answered; and he twisted the boy's weak hands and a flood of tears started from his eyes; the thirsty dust drank the tears. And this weeping lasted a long, long time, because the indifferent, immutable

old man, standing on the granite plain, kept drawing tears from the weary eyes.

The tears kept dropping into the hole in the earth in a plaintive stream, and the seed appeared above the surface of the earth like a point. Then it sent out its first sprout, its first leaflets, and while the boy kept weeping, the new tree grew branches and leaves, and a long, long time passed until the tree had a strong trunk, a luxuriant foliage, leaves and flowers that perfumed the air. It rose high in the solitude, even higher than the indifferent, immutable old man on the granite plain.

The wind made the leaves of the tree rustle, the birds of the sky came to nest in the tree tops, and its flowers matured into fruits, and then the old man freed the boy who stopped weeping, but the child's hair was all white. The three children stretched out their greedy hands for the fruit of the tree; but the emaciated giant took them by the neck, like cubs, drew out another seed, and walked to a nearby rock. Raising his foot, he pressed the teeth of the first boy to the ground; and again the teeth gnawed the ground and grated under the foot of the old man, indifferent and immutable, erect, immense and silent on the granite plain.

### § 152. *Meaning of the parable*

That desolate plain is our life, and that inexorable ghost is the power of our will, and those trembling children are our entrails, our faculties and our potencies, from whose weakness and helplessness the will wrests the all-powerful energy that subjugates the world and dispels the shadows of the unknown.

A handful of dust, suspended by an ephemeral gust of wind upon the face of the earth, to fall again, when the gust is

over it, and to scatter itself; a handful of dust: a weak and transitory creature that carries within itself the *original* power, the freed and unused power, that is not present in the waves of the sea nor in the weight of the mountain nor in the revolutions of the planets; a handful of dust can look to the heights and addressing the mysterious beginning of things, say, "If you exist as a free and conscious force of your acts, you are, like me, a Will; I belong to your race, I am your fellow creature; but if you only exist as a fatal and blind force, if the universe is a crowd of slaves who move around in infinite space, having for a master a shadow that does not know itself, then I am worth much more than you; give me back the name that I gave you, because there is nothing greater than I upon the earth nor in the sky!"

§ 153. *The collective will. A miracle of the map*

The will is an omnipotent force, a transfiguring light, no less in a man than in a nation. There, on the map which I have before me, I see a tiny pale green spot between the big yellow space of Germany and the light blue one that represents the sea. That tiny spot is the most wonderful stroke of the brush ever made on the surface of the earth, since this infinite picture was painted. Do you know what the wonders that humble stain on the map means to the nation whose work it is? Do you know how much of it is actually their work? Not wealth, nor power, nor liberty, nor culture; the ground they trod, the land upon which their houses are built, the mud in which the tree takes root, the clod that the plow breaks up, are works of their genius, artifices of their industry, miracles of their love. Inch by inch that nation saved its land from the waters; wave by wave they repelled the invasion of the sea; day by day they realized that they

lacked space for their movements; beneath their feet the ground was giving way; around them the warmth and breadth of their native land was disappearing, and they were like the orphan who wakes up and looks in vain for the lap of his mother. But they recovered this warmth and breadth with a sublime effort; day by day they rescued their land from the sea, as if at the dawn of each day the sun had reached into the water and seizing a rock, lifted it from the depth of the abyss with a titanic force and placed it again above the waves. . . . This land, whose earth without solidity, whose color without contours, this low, damp, flat land, is the greatest monument in the world to man's will! Gentle and tenacious nation, great in many tasks, weaver and farmer, painter and sailor; nation that adores flowers, cultivated by white, industrious hands behind windows from which perhaps can be seen, if the fog clears, boats that sail for lands, dear to the sun, in search of ebony, oranges and fragrant spices. Your will is strong and fertile like the cows in your stables; your dull blue eyes sometimes reflect the iron in your soul; no one like you, neither nation nor man, owes so much to himself; because, just as the bird makes its nest with bits of hay, small twigs and earth, weaving it fibre by fibre, you gathered that thin clay upon which you tread; nation where flowers are loved, where domestic candor awaits the return of the laborers in houses as clean as silver, where slow rivers flow singing, if not the hymn, the psalm of liberty.

§ 154. *Personality in nations*

Can we not extend all that has been said about the unity that we call *personality* in each one of us, without any essential difference, to the spirit of a race, to the genius of a country, equally capable of the name, *personality*? Is not

everything that the psychologist's observation finds in the center of our personal history reproduced in those great groups of people? And are they not endowed with all the degrees of harmony and continuity which constitutes the living synthesis reflected in the individual's consciousness? Are not there countries whose compact and strong personality is concentrated in one single idea, in one single passion, and who are blind and deaf to all else, like the fanatic and the obsessed; are there not others, also, whose personal integration is a concordant and graceful complexity; others, in which two hostile tendencies alternate or maintain a perpetual conflict, like those temperaments that carry within themselves contradiction and struggle; others, incoherent, disintegrated, lacking definite character because of an anarchic individualism; others, who have no personality of their own and live upon a borrowed one, like a somnambulist dominated by admiration or fear; others who, ecstatic in the contemplation of their past, seem to be removed from the reality of life, like a person who endeavors to live his life over again by concentrating his memory on the past; others, who in their enthusiasm, fury or discontent simulate intoxication; others, whose personality can be easily modified because of their progressive development; others, who are prone to stagnate in habit; others, finally, whose character suffers a fundamental deviation from a certain point in its history, as one, who after a profound moral crisis, becomes completely different from what he formerly was? . . .

#### § 155. *National genius*

A nation has a constant and firm personality if we add to the continuity of its generations the persistence of certain hereditary types (not only physiological but also spiritual)

and a supreme idea within which the activity of those successive generations may be bound. This personality is the sacred coffer, the palladium, the strength and the wealth of a nation; this is worth more than its soil. Its originality is what makes it unique and necessary to the order of the world; its originality is Nature's gift, that can not be transferred, or recovered when lost, except by diving into the inner abyss where it is hidden. Because every national soul is a group of elements, ordered according to a rhythm that has no precedents in creation and will not ever be reproduced if it is broken.

To maintain this personality is the ideal epic of nations. There are times when the collective character is eclipsed and disappears, not absorbed by another more populous or more energetic, but hidden under imitation and artifice. As it often happens among men, Nature's truth then yields its privileges to a mannerism, which takes root, more or less superficially, in fashion. As, for example, when the colorless and uniform civilization of the XVIIIth century, spreading from the French court, drowns the originality, the traditional genius of every country, and in this way a conventional model is the substitute for the spontaneous palpitation of life, in usages and laws as well as in literature, until those *voices of the nations*, which Herder heard, are raised, and the sap again runs through the tree of each nation, and, everywhere, the heart and the fantasy look for the maternal warmth of memory.

At other times personality does not yet exist, as in the child's temperament which is a web of anarchic tendencies. Later comes a great impulse of proselytism and passion (that is like the crisis of puberty in nations) which raises and fixes forever the personal form that did not exist. Just as when, at the Prophet's voice, the nomadic tribes of Arabia suddenly

raise themselves to the dignity of History, or when Luther's word reaches the soulless nations of the North and arouses and inflames them, their soul is born and they stamp their seals upon the surface of the earth.

§ 156. *To change without losing character*

But without abdicating from that personal unity; without demolishing the altars of that divinity called the *genius* of a race, the nations that really *live* change their love, their thought, their task; they shift the rite of their cult, they struggle with their past to get away from it, not as fleeing smoke or the leaf or the feather, lighter than the wind, leaves the earth, but rather as the tree separates itself from its root so that it grows, as if conceiving and outlining the idea of the blooming foliage which is to crown its work.

In order to judge if this development is possible in a certain direction, it is not necessary to give way to doubt because phantoms of the past frighten us with the idea of an irresistible and inimical fatality. A nation's fund of dispositions and aptitudes should not always be limited by the apparent reality of its history. New capacities can arise as long as life lasts and renews itself, sometimes creating them by the suggestion and example of others, and fusing them into its depths by virtue of an heroic and passionate fire that lights and prepares the soul to operate on it; at other times, summoning these capacities from the mysterious ancestral fund where they sleep and wait, like dawn in the depth of shadows (for in the soul of nations there are also some of those ignored resources of faculties, of vocations, of aptitudes that have not yet been put into play, or that, not quite evident, hide themselves and extend slowly and quietly to the future, by the occult transmission of heredity). Thus the poetic and contemplative

genius of the Saxons comes forth again in the England of the Renaissance after being crushed under the iron foot of the Norman conqueror.

Nations change while they live; they move, if not from a definite ideal, from immediate finality; they test themselves in new conflicts, and these changes do not diminish their fundamental originality, their *raison d'être*, when they mean only a modification of the *rhythm* or structure of their personality by elements of their own substance that combine in a different way or that become evident for the first time, or when the new elements, taken from outside, are not like a light crust that will be blown away by the wind, but penetrate into and become one with the living harmony which regulates the soul.

It is a great thing when this transformation, subordinated to the unity and the persistence of an internal norm, takes place in unison and rhythm with time; there are situations, however, which require violent transitions and sudden escapes from tediousness and passions. When time is remiss in the fulfillment of its task; when the inertia of the past has kept the soul for a long time in uncertainty or stupor, it may be necessary for a violent impulse to stimulate the soul to recover its lost goal, and to hold the axe in the air ready to demolish in a minute what has taken long years to build. This is the heroic efficacy of revolution sent by Proteus to the house of luxury and to the jail of oppression.

### § 157. *Autumnal Picture*

Winter, old and strong, is approaching. Its impetuous breath is felt on this autumnal afternoon in great gusts of wind which steals from everything that is movable in the landscape its tranquillity and the soft undulation in which it has



reposed. Things become restless, as if discontented with their position: the trees, which shake their branches, the wings of the windmill, which pursue each other in futile fury, the chain of the well, the clothes drying on the line in the neighbor's yard, the dust, which rises in heavy clouds. Through the sky wander the white clouds which the wind waves like the standards of its battles. The windows of the house across the street have not been opened. Behind the window panes appears a sweet and thoughtful face, paler than usual. On the other hand, upon the almost infantile face which I see go by every afternoon, close to the large, kind head of a cow the strong wind makes two fresh roses bloom.

Seated at the window, I spend my leisure in contemplation. While on my mantelpiece a Cyclop's eye that had been covered for some time by its black eyelid looks at me, and beside me, my greyhound offers his cold and silky ears to the caresses of his master, my attention is fixed upon a silent symphony: that of the leaves which, flying in disorderly flocks at the wind's caprices, leave the trees naked and fill the earth and the air. I become interested, as in a sentimental novel, in their sad adventures. Now they rise and whirl in a crazy flight; now, somewhat sheltered from the wind, they move along lonesomely for a short distance and remain motionless a moment, before languidly tracing another line; now they accumulate and push each other, as if terrified or stiff with cold; now they tear themselves into pieces and dash with suicidal intent into a blast; now they spin wildly, like mad dancers. . . . Their changeable fates bring food for my fantasy and cause my heart to beat faster. Sometimes they seem to me the fugitive remains of old papers: letters of by-gone loves and vanities of the imagination, writings that never went beyond their larva stage. I imagine them later as a

comedian's tinsel crown rent to pieces. Other times they seem to me like bloodless, yellow hands; the hands of a dying man, hands that vainly seek to play a sad melody on a harp they can not find. . . . Leaves falling, falling ceaselessly, and the soul of the landscape enters, meanwhile, by the door of the senses into my inner world. I concentrate again without ceasing to watch the dying flutter of wings. The faded elegy in the romantic *pathos* of the falling and the murmuring of dried leaves begins to sing within me. Abandonment, the voluptuousness of melancholy, pleasure in a delicate and mild bitterness. . . .

Now as to myself, where is the object of my contemplation? Is it within me? Is it outside? . . . Leaves falling, falling ceaselessly, and for an instant I feel that their deathly sadness saturates everything that is visible, and rises to the sky and saddens it too, and even reaches to the far-away line where a tenuous mist begins to weave its linen garments. But then, much later, the funereal mood that had permeated the landscape, like the shadow of a cloud, becomes concrete and fastens itself again upon the leaves, which are the ones that really depart and perish, that will never return to their tree. . . . Over the rest remains only a hazy aureole of sadness, as of a grief born from sympathy. Leaves are the only things that die. The sentiment of my autumnal contemplation does not succeed in producing in my soul that illusion of the dream when beautiful and sad appearance conquers the empire of reality and almost persuades us of the universal agony of things. I *know* that this swoon does not last. The idea of a near and certain resurrection watches within me as if in a penumbra or in the distance, and maintains the sentiment of the landscape in a key of melancholy reverie. Above the disturbance of the fallen leaves rises the bare skeletons of

trees, firm and naked like certitude, and upon the clear steel of the air, they etch the simple and short promise of our lives.

§ 158. *Conclusion*

Such is my view of things as I reach the end of this book. The soul of the landscape gives me the soul of the last page, and as though infused and concentrated in it, the soul of the others, and my soul finds itself in Nature's painting, and by the painting sees how the book is its faithful word. The book and it are one: a book is either futile paper or a soul that weaves its cocoon with its own substance. As long as this soul of mine flies in the wind that moves the leaves and carries the voices of men,—messenger of the world, an imperishable bond, I shall remain preparing another soul for myself, as the tree prepares another foliage and the land another harvest, because he who does not change his soul with the passing of time is a parched tree, a waste land. I shall rear a new soul in silent reverie, like a bird in moulting period, and when it matures, if I judge it good enough to distribute to others, you will then learn my new sentiment, my new *truth*, my new word.

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